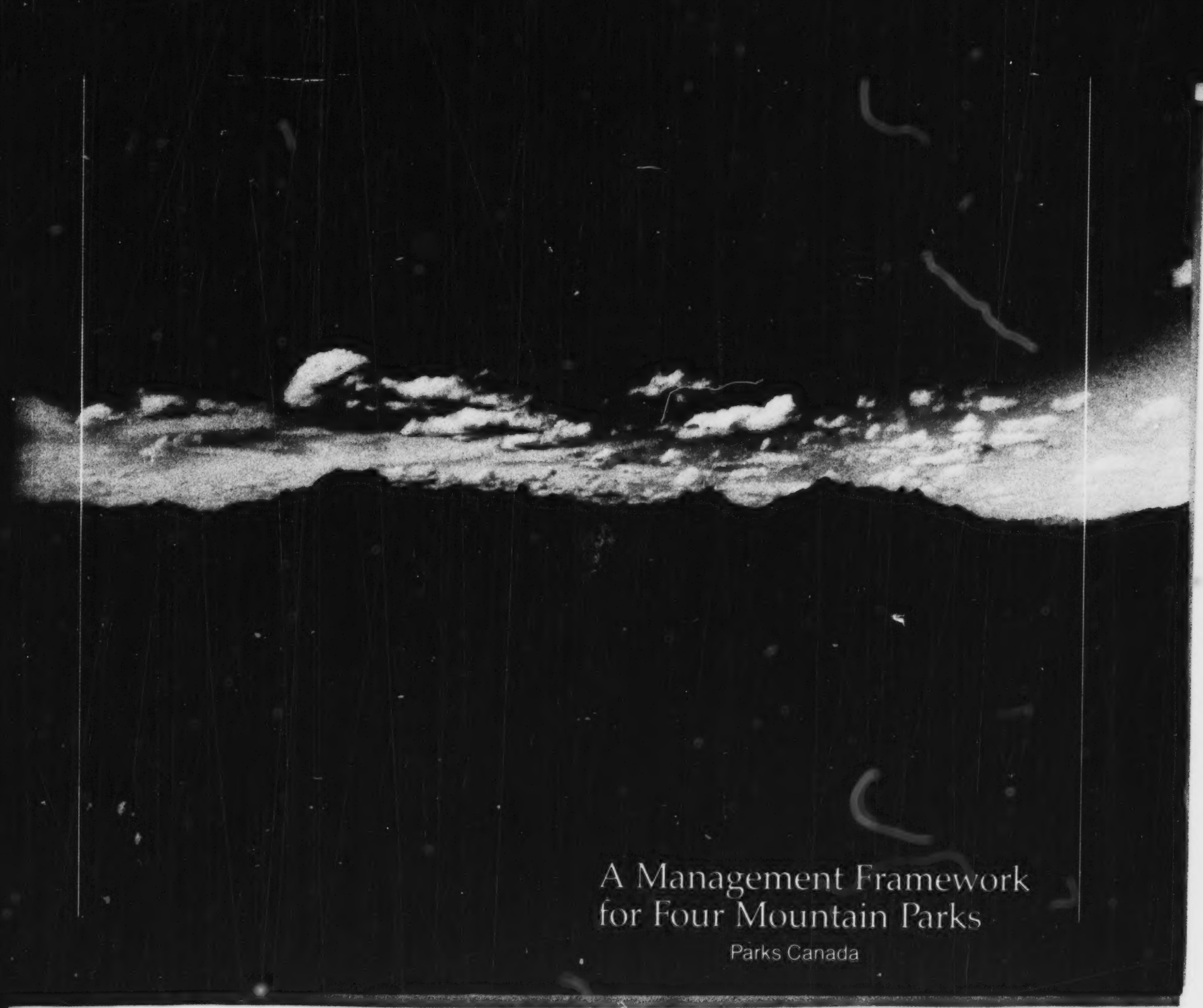

A Management Framework for Four Mountain Parks

Parks Canada

In Trust for Tomorrow

A Management Framework for Four Mountain Parks

FRONT COVER:
The Bow River from Sulphur Mountain, Banff National Park.

Minister of Supply and Services Canada 1986

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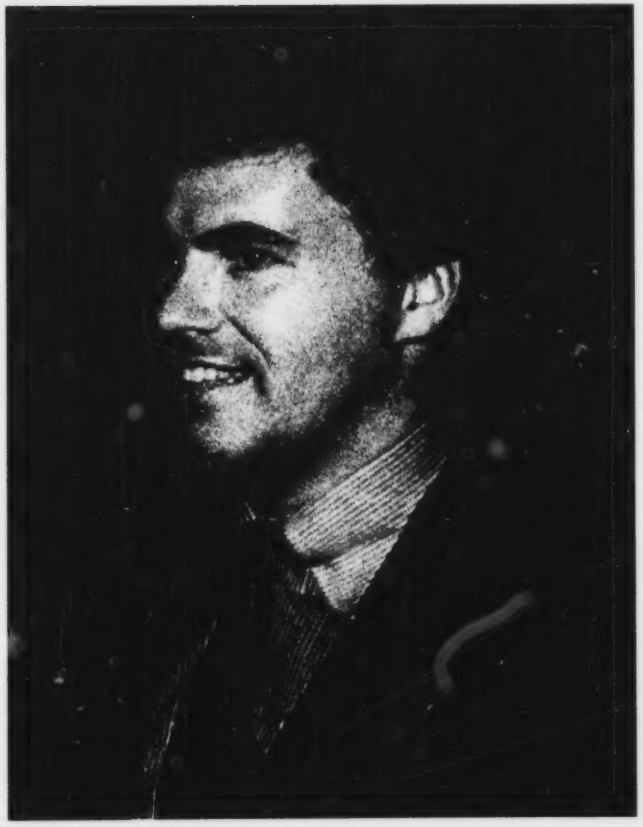
Introduction

Of all the wonders of Canada's national parks, perhaps none is more astonishing than the fact that they exist at all. Today, they are so much a part of our way of life that it is easy to forget they did not always exist: they were willed into being in 1885, when Canada was deeply troubled by the divisiveness that followed the hanging of Louis Riel. Moreover, it was a time when the Prime Minister, Sir John A. Macdonald, was pre-occupied with plans for building the national railway needed to stitch Canada together.

Nonetheless, in the midst of his other worries, Sir John A. turned his attention to reports arriving from the District of Alberta detailing the operations of ambitious speculators near the Banff Hot Springs. On 25 November, 1885, the government decided to end the increasing number of outrageous land claims by signing Order-in-Council Number 2197, which vested in the Crown all rights to 26 square kilometres of land on Sulphur Mountain. Eighteen months later, the Parliament of the raw new country took an even bolder step when it passed the Rocky Mountains Park Act, which established the world's third national park system.



Once begun, the idea of creating national parks clearly excited Canadians: almost immediately after the initiative at Banff Springs, the government reserved thousands of square kilometres of land for future park use. But I doubt that even Sir John A., with all his vision and confidence in Canada's future, could have foreseen the sheer breadth of what he had started. One hundred years after passage of the original Order-in-Council, Canada has the world's second-largest parks system – some 136,000 square kilometres of national parks embracing every province and territory of the country. We are, indeed, the fortunate beneficiaries of geography, which lavished great beauty on Canada; of history, which delayed development of vast land tracts, especially in the West; and, yes, even of politics, which made it necessary – or advantageous or just shrewd – to establish the parks.

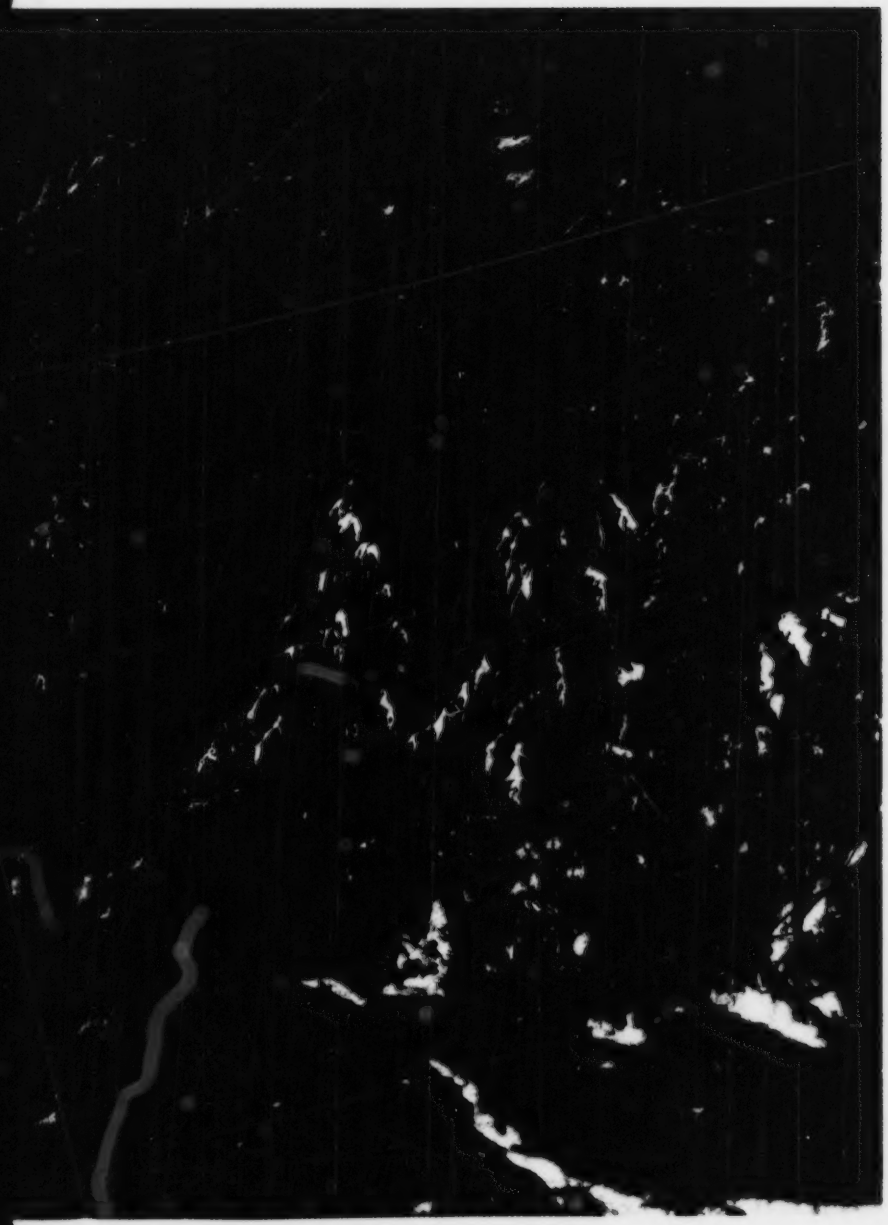
Today, in addition to 75 historic sites and nine heritage canals, there are 31 authorized national parks in Canada, ranging from a group of islands in the St. Lawrence River that total less than five square kilometres, to the splendour of Wood Buffalo, almost 45,000 square kilometres in size. Taken together, they offer an impressive range of park experiences – whether the isolated grandeur of Nahanni or the friendly accessibility of the Prince Edward Island National Park, in my own home province. Of the 31, few are visited more frequently than are what are known as the Four Mountain Parks: Banff, Jasper, Kootenay, and Yoho. Few are larger than any of the Four; indeed, the land-mass of the Rocky Mountain Parks is four times that of Prince Edward Island.

The Four straddle the border between Alberta and British Columbia – a total of 20,160 square kilometres encompassing everything from the invigorating challenge of mountain tops to the limpid beauty of lakes so silent that generations of visitors have mistakenly congratulated themselves on having discovered them.

The global importance of the Four Mountain Parks is evident in their designation by UNESCO as a World Heritage Site. Even earlier, more than two centuries ago, the importance of parks was articulated by William Pitt the Elder, when he referred to the parks of London as "the lungs of the city". That image is even more resonant today; certainly, it has particular potency for a society struggling to breathe freely in an increasingly complex and ecologically threatened world. We are the fortunate heirs to parks born out of a sense of natural order and of optimism, at a time when the idea of "communing with nature" was more widely accepted, and more easily accomplished, than it is today.

The protection of our natural and cultural heritage in parks has been an accepted part of public policy in Canada since the land in Banff was set aside to protect its resources, in balance with public use. As the Minister responsible for ensuring the integrity of the Four Mountain Parks, as of all Canada's national parks, my job is to act as trustee on behalf of their real landlords, the people of Canada.

And it is in that capacity that I welcome the publication of this Management Framework for the Four Mountain Parks. The reality is that the very popularity of the Four – more than 8,000,000 people visited them in 1985 – makes it necessary to consider their future, with great care and in meticulous detail. The Framework is designed both to stimulate and to inform discussion about that future.



Winter at Pyramid Mountain, Jasper.

This document is one of a series of steps taken to establish policies that will affect the Four, to be implemented over the next 15 years, in the context of their current use and condition; of the problems and opportunities the Four present, either singly or as a group; and of the needs of the people who find in these parks the opportunities to "recreate" that are so essential in today's world.

The question is how we plan to deal with both the benefits and the problems that are the inevitable consequences of the use of the Four Parks. Certainly, if we do not plan, we will face the kind of haphazard growth that damages any park's environment and that alters forever its basic reasons for existence within a national parks system.

Clearly, that cannot be allowed to happen. Our object must be to enhance the heritage values associated with the Four Mountain Parks by employing the most sophisticated techniques available in land-use planning, in visitor management, and in any other of the disciplines required to meet the complex needs of the Four.

In order to identify those needs, the Department of the Environment undertook a program of public and professional consultation, of which this Management Framework is a part. While a more detailed description of the process can be four d in the text of this document, it is worth outlining here because it demonstrates the care taken in the planning process, both by the public at large and by the Department. Planning the future of four parks as a block was an especially challenging task but was chosen in the case of Banff, Jasper, Yoho, and Kootenay because they form a continuous geographic flow, share many resources and elicit many of the same kinds of concerns by users.

The process began more than four years ago with the identification of major issues, followed by a series of background papers on those issues. From them, three philosophical approaches were formulated, representing three different options:

1. further restriction of public access;

2. encouragement of increased access;

3. leaving parks use as it is.

The various philosophical perspectives were the basis of a document, Planning Scenario for the Four Mountain Parks Block, which was produced by Parks Canada; it led, in turn, to the Management Framework. Each step of the planning process has been undertaken only after extensive public consultation: there have already been four separate series of meetings, over the course of four years, involving interested individuals and groups representing every point of view; perhaps it is a measure of the global importance of the Four Mountain Parks that they have inspired participation beyond the Alberta and British Columbia borders and, in fact, beyond the borders of Canada itself.

Like the other publications that have resulted from the process of planning for the Four Parks, the Management Framework is being widely distributed; working within it, plans will be drawn up for the specific Parks.

But even before that occurs, it should be noted that, because the Parks are not monolithic, no one of the three philosophies originally offered for their care adequately serves the needs of the Parks and of the people who use them. One of the major accomplishments of the consultative process to date, in fact, is that it has established a fourth option: a mixture of restriction, increased use and unchanging use, applying whichever of the three philosophies meets the needs of a given area or program. Some visitor activities will always be restricted and some areas of the parks will always be tightly managed because the presence of visitors, however well-intentioned, would damage the very aspect of the Parks people want to use. There are other areas, however, that are being under-utilized – places where, with care and planning and without harm, more visitors could be given more opportunities to enjoy the Parks. And, of course, there are also sections of the Four where the present course remains the most appropriate one.

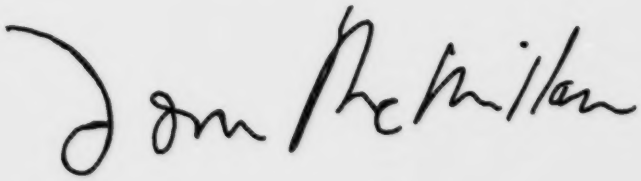
There is no suggestion that the Management Framework fully meets the objectives of all the parties concerned, because those objectives inevitably conflict in some respects. Rather, this document is based on informed and thorough efforts by Parks Canada to reconcile differing perspectives with one another, all within its statutory mandate. The result is a delicate balance between preservation and use, which is precisely what was envisaged when the parks were first established.

The Management Framework is a thorough document and will require careful attention and an open mind from any person or group interested in the future of the Four Mountain Parks. This is hardly surprising: our parks are more than the sum of their trees and bears; picnic tables and wildflowers; buildings and visitors. They are the raw material from which, in the past, we shaped our national consciousness and they remain a key to our sense of ourselves as Canadians.

The parks impose grave responsibilities on us all and the decisions taken about them cause ripples that are not always immediately evident. As a former Minister of Tourism, I am aware of the tension between preservation and use, a tension that has been apparent throughout the consultative process. I believe, nonetheless, that common sense and fair-mindedness provide a foundation for resolving such seemingly contradictory interests. I reject the old idea that preservation and use are mutually exclusive and need to be ranked. There can be no use without preservation: if the parks are not preserved, what will be left of them, in time, to use? Conversely, the parks were created and preserved for people to use and appreciate. Why else would that long-ago government set aside the anxieties of its day to establish a parks system in the first place?

In planning for the Four Mountain Parks, or for any others, we face difficult questions for which we must work to find clear-cut, realistic answers. The challenge is to discover ways of conserving the pristine beauty of the parks while, at the same time, permitting them to be used to amuse, inform, train, delight, comfort and even inspire, people, especially our youth. Otherwise, who will care about our parks today? Who will learn to care for them tomorrow? Who will meet the economic challenge of the rest of the 80s and beyond, keeping pace with increasing demands for service when the funds available are shrinking?

There is an immutable reality: parks are not a frill, peripheral to the Canadian experience – they are in its very marrow. That fact lends special poignancy, in the context of this Management Framework for the Four Mountain Parks, to the words of a native elder at a Royal Commission hearing several years ago. "We did not inherit the land from our forefathers," he said. "We hold it in trust for our children." And it is in precisely that sense that we must plan for the parks that we safeguard in trust for tomorrow.



Tom McMillan, P.C., M.P.,
Hillsborough

Minister of the Environment

Table of Contents

		Page
	INTRODUCTION	**i**
	TABLE OF CONTENTS	**vii**
	LIST OF FIGURES	**x**
	SUMMARY	**xi**
1.	**FOUR MOUNTAIN PARKS PLANNING PROGRAM**	**1**
1.1	BACKGROUND	**5**
1.1.1	Description of the Four Mountain Parks and Regional Settings	**5**
1.1.2	Existing Levels of Use	**6**
1.1.3	Responding to an Uncertain Future	**6**
1.1.4	Summary of the Public Consultation Program	**8**
2.	**PURPOSE AND OBJECTIVES STATEMENT – BANFF, JASPER, KOOTENAY AND YOHO NATIONAL PARKS**	**9**
2.1	PURPOSE FOR THE FOUR MOUNTAIN PARKS	**11**
2.2	OBJECTIVES FOR THE PARKS	**11**
2.2.1	Protection and Preservation of Resources	**11**
2.2.2	Appreciation, Understanding, and Enjoyment of the Parks, Their Facilities and Services	**11**
2.2.3	Integrating Regional Considerations	**12**
3.	**DIRECTIONS FOR PROTECTING AND MANAGING RESOURCES**	**13**
3.1	A GENERAL FRAMEWORK	**15**
3.1.1	Protecting Physiographic and Geologic Resources	**15**
3.1.2	Restoration of Sites That Have Already Been Damaged	**16**
3.1.3	Hydrological Resources	**16**
3.1.4	Protecting Associated Vegetation	**17**
3.1.5	Managing Fire	**18**
3.1.6	Protecting Wildlife	**18**
3.1.7	Sport Fishing	**19**
3.1.8	Aesthetics	**19**
3.1.9	Cultural Resources	**20**

3.1.10	Protecting Natural Areas	21
3.1.11	Inter/Intra Agency Cooperation	21
3.1.12	Air Quality	22
4.	**DIRECTION FOR VISITOR UNDERSTANDING, APPRECIATION AND ENJOYMENT**	**23**
4.1	A GENERAL FRAMEWORK	25
4.1.1	Visitor Use	25
4.1.2	The Quality of Park Opportunities	27
4.1.3	Relationships with Regions	27
4.2	COMMUNICATIONS SERVICES	29
4.2.1	General Comments	29
4.2.2	Heritage Resources	30
4.2.3	Opportunities for Enjoyment and Use	30
4.2.4	Safe and Appropriate Use	31
4.2.5	Public Involvement	32
4.3	BACKCOUNTRY OPPORTUNITIES AND FACILITIES	32
4.3.1	Range of Opportunities	32
4.3.2	Backcountry Facilities	36
4.3.3	Backcountry Trails	39
4.3.4	Backcountry Camping	40
4.3.5	Overnight Roofed Accommodation	40
4.3.6	Group Camping	42
4.4	DAY-USE FACILITIES AND SERVICES	43
4.4.1	General	43
4.4.2	Providing Day-Use Opportunities	44
4.5	RECREATIONAL ACTIVITIES	45
4.5.1	General	45
4.5.2	Driving for Pleasure	46
4.5.3	Cross-Country Skiing	46
4.5.4	Canoeing, Kayaking and Rafting	47

4.5.5	Snowmobiling	47
4.5.6	Bicycling	48
4.5.7	Use of Horses	49
4.5.8	Sport Fishing	50
4.5.9	Caving	51
4.6	FRONTCOUNTRY VISITOR ACCOMMODATION	51
4.6.1	General	51
4.6.2	Campgrounds	53
4.6.3	Hostels	54
4.6.4	Outlying Commercial Accommodation	56
4.7	TOWNS AND VISITOR CENTRES	58
4.7.1	General	58
4.7.2	The Town of Banff	59
4.7.3	The Town of Jasper	60
4.7.4	The Community of Field	61
4.7.5	The Lake Louise Visitor Centre	61
4.8	ACCESS	62
4.8.1	General	62
4.8.2	National Transportation and Utility Corridors	62
4.8.3	Park Roads	62
4.8.4	Airfields	63
4.8.5	Public Transportation	64
5.	**COMPLETING THE PARK-MANAGEMENT PLANS**	65
	SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY	69
	APPENDIX A: AN EXPLANATION OF THE BACKCOUNTRY OPPORTUNITY CONCEPT	77
	APPENDIX B: NATIONAL PARK ZONING SYSTEM	80

List of Figures

		Page
Figure 1	The Planning Process	**2**
Figure 2	Regional Setting	**4**
Figure 3	A. Existing Backcountry Opportunities – Banff National Park	**33**
	B. Existing Backcountry Opportunities – Jasper National Park	**35**
	C. Existing Backcountry Opportunities – Kootenay National Park	**37**
	D. Existing Backcountry Opportunities – Yoho National Park	**38**
Figure 4	Existing Accommodation Facilities – Backcountry	**41**
Figure 5	Existing Accommodation Facilities – Frontcountry	**52**

Summary

Background

The Management Framework defines the overall context within which to consider the future of Banff, Jasper, Kootenay and Yoho national parks, the so-called Four Mountain Parks. It will guide protection, management, development and future planning of the Four over the next 15 years. The Management Framework has been drafted within the statutory limits of the National Parks Act and of the Parks Canada Policy; it is the result of an extensive planning and public consultation program that began in 1981. More detailed park management plans will be completed by 1987 for each of the Four Parks, based on the Management Framework.

The Four encompass a large protected area of 20,160 square kilometres straddling the Continental Divide: Kootenay and Yoho in British Columbia, and Banff and Jasper in Alberta to the east. In 1984, this area, which includes a representative cross-section of the Canadian Rockies, was declared a World Heritage Site by the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). These Parks provide recreation for neighbouring regions, particularly Edmonton and Calgary, and are important national and international tourist destinations.

The Framework will serve as a guide for parks managers' decisions, pending completion of the individual park-management plans.

Proposals

The primary emphasis of this Framework is the protection of the natural and cultural resources of these Four Parks and this protection takes precedence, when conflicts occur, over increased use and development. The Framework also provides a way of responding to increased use, while expanding the range of appropriate park opportunities, all in keeping with the need to protect Canada's heritage resources. These goals will be achieved by giving more attention to the management of heritage resources and by improving, expanding and redeveloping existing services and facilities. Other facilities will be established in new locations only in special circumstances and where no serious environmental damage will result.

The Framework has been organized to highlight so-called Block Direction Statements, which are the recommendations of Parks Canada's professional staff, based on the consultation process leading to the publication of this document. Implementing them will require both private and public effort and resources. Actions to be taken by Parks Canada will be identified in the individual park-management plans, and will depend on what resources are available to Parks Canada and, in the case of new facilities, on public need and demand.

The following summarizes the main proposals contained in the Management Framework.

Resource Protection and Management (see Section 3)

– The historical and ecological integrity of any park is a prerequisite to its use; therefore, Parks Canada's primary responsibility is to protect heritage resources.

– Parks Canada, in keeping with its mandate, must offer special protection to those resources that are of national, international or park significance, or that are unique, endangered or vulnerable.

– There is a need to minimize the impact of park development and use on existing sites and to restore to their natural state those that have suffered damage in the past.

– Because of the importance of certain vegetation, such as that of the montane eco-region, special measures will be developed to minimize the impact of existing use on the environment.

– Important wildlife habitats will be stringently protected.

– The effects of land use on the aesthetic quality and cultural resources of the Parks will be evaluated and corrective action will be taken where necessary.

– Large wilderness areas with no facilities for visitors will continue to predominate in the Parks.

Visitor Understanding, Appreciation And Enjoyment (see Section 4.1)

– Within defined limits, Parks Canada will respond to increased demand for facilities and services largely by making better use of existing areas devoted to those purposes. The definition of limits will be based primarily on environmental considerations as well as on the social and economic consequences of increased demands and services.

– Existing facilities and services will be upgraded.

– Parks Canada will continue to cooperate with provincial, regional and municipal governments to develop cooperative land-management strategies.

Communication Services (see Section 4.2)

– Services that provide information to the public will be expanded and improved.

– More emphasis will be placed on increasing awareness, understanding, and appreciation of the parks' heritage resources.

– Interpretation, information services, and the orientation of visitors will be improved for the Four Parks as a block.

Backcountry Opportunities and Facilities (see Section 4.3)

– There will be more opportunities for visits to the backcountry and, where it is appropriate, existing backcountry facilities will be maintained, upgraded, or expanded.

– New alpine huts and trail shelters, comparable in scale and design with surrounding topography, may be added, but no new commercial lodges will be permitted. Furthermore, selected areas of the backcountry will be maintained without services or facilities.

Day-use Facilities and Services (see Section 4.4)

– More opportunities for day use will be provided.

– The demand for commercial day-use facilities will be met by permitting expansion and upgrading of those that already exist.

– No leases or licences will be issued for new commercial day-use facilities.

Recreational Activities (see Section 4.5)

– In order to attract visitors of varying skills, interests and capabilities, the Parks will offer an increased number and a wider range of recreational opportunities.

– Opportunities for cross-country skiing will be upgraded and expanded.

– The use of snowmobiles for recreational purposes will be prohibited in the Parks. This step is necessary to protect natural habitat and wildlife in the Parks; to maintain the integrity of the park experience for visitors; and to eliminate the need for the kind of "policing" that is incompatible with a park environment.

– Trail bicycling will be permitted on designated trails.

Frontcountry Visitor Accommodation (see Section 4.6)

– In response to public demand, more overnight accommodation, accessible to those with cars, will be permitted. This will be made possible, in most cases, by undertaking clearly defined improvements to the capacity of accommodations in the two towns; by expanding existing campgrounds; and by controlled expansion of existing outlying commercial accommodation (OCA).

– To meet the normal demand at other than peak weekends, existing campgrounds will be expanded and some new campgrounds will be permitted.

– An increase will be permitted in the number of people that can be accommodated in hostels.

– No new outlying commercial accommodation facilities (OCAs) will be permitted, but existing ones will be allowed to expand consistent with the zoning regulations that cover the area being leased.

Towns and Visitor Centres (see Section 4.7)

– In general, the definition of the boundaries of the town of Banff will incorporate immediately adjoining built-up and subdivided areas. The emphasis, if new growth is being considered, will be on infill or redevelopment that is compatible with the scale and design of the natural surroundings.

– Boundaries for the town of Jasper will be based on the draft community plan that has been completed. Growth will be permitted through environmentally sensitive development within the town boundaries, by redeveloping and upgrading existing structures.

– The administrative centre for Parks Canada and the operational centre for the Canadian Pacific Railway will continue to be located in Field, British Columbia. An increase in services to visitors is considered acceptable for Field.

– Only that development that is in accordance with the Lake Louise Plan approved in 1982 will proceed.

Access (see Section 4.8)

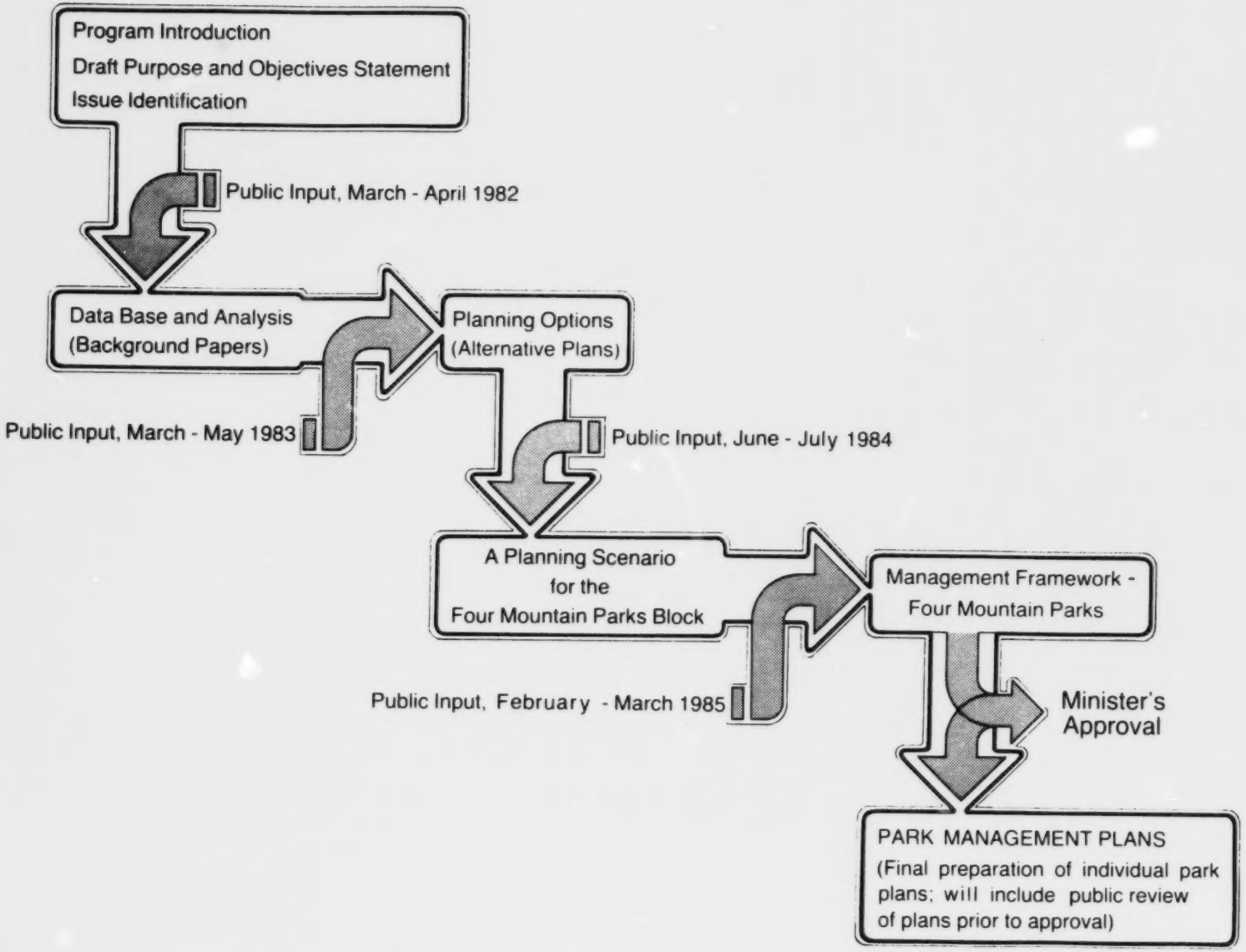
– No new roads will be built within the Four Parks, although there will be improvements and adjustments to existing roads.

– The existence of airfields in Banff and Jasper is inappropriate and their use as emergency landing strips will be reviewed.

Chateau Lake Louise, Banff.

1. Four Mountain Parks Planning Program

Figure 1: PLANNING PROCESS



1. Four Mountain Parks Planning Program

The Four Mountain Parks Planning Program was initiated in 1981 to prepare long-range management plans for Banff, Jasper, Kootenay, and Yoho national parks. These plans are intended to guide the development, management, protection, and use of the parks for 15 years. In order to ensure that changes reflect contemporary conditions, major reviews are normally undertaken every five years. (Figure 1 illustrates the stages of the planning program.)

The program undertaken for the Four Mountain Parks is unique because it covers the Four simultaneously, an approach that has been taken because the Four adjoin one another, sharing resource management and inspiring similar visitor reactions.

The Purpose and Objectives Statement, approved in 1983 after public review, set the stage for developing planning options and preparing park management plans. (It has been reproduced in Section 2.) The statement links the recommendations in this Management Framework to the Parks Canada Policy, approved by Cabinet in 1979.

After considerable analysis, including comments made during previous phases of public consultation, and of information received from various federal, provincial, and municipal agencies, three options were developed to cover the range of proposals that could be considered within the context of Parks Canada's policy. Each option was applied to the seven frontcountry (car-accessible) and four backcountry areas that make up the Four Parks. They differ in their interpretation of the number and type of visitor facilities that can be developed, the capacity of the parks to cope with visitors, and the degree of impact on resources that is acceptable. The options were distributed for public review in June, 1984.

Once the public meetings were completed and the comments from them analyzed, a series of draft block-direction statements was developed and distributed in a document, "A Planning Scenario for the Four Mountain Parks Block". These block-direction statements were revised after advisory meetings with representatives of various regional and national organizations and analysis of comments made during the public consultations that were held between February and March, 1985.

The Planning Scenario was revised as the Management Framework – Four Mountain Parks; after further public consultation, this document, which recognizes both the contiguous geography and interrelated management needs of the Four Parks, sets out guiding principles within which parks management will take place.

Within the Management Framework the block-direction statements in Sections Three (Resource Protection and Management) and Four (Visitor Understanding, Appreciation and Enjoyment) are guides to the relative emphasis to be placed on the two major aspects of Parks Canada's mandate. Background information and rationale are provided for each block-direction statement.

The Management Framework also contains direction statements for the Four Parks, as a block. Park-management plans, however, will be prepared for each one separately, based, of course, on the Management Framework and in keeping with the overall direction it details. (See Section Five – Completing the Park-Management Plans.)

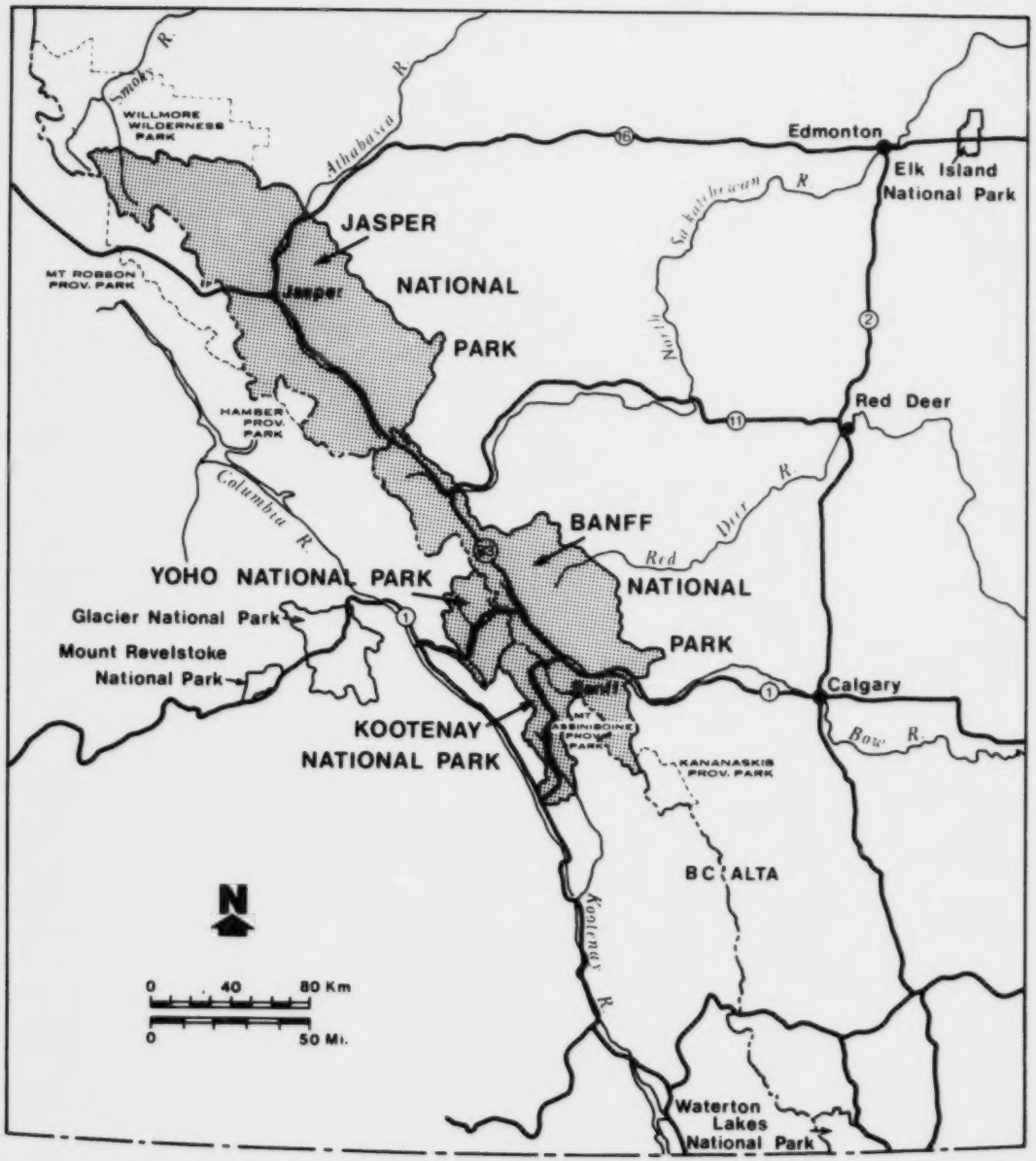


Figure 2:
REGIONAL SETTING

1.1 BACKGROUND

1.1.1 Description of the Four Mountain Parks and Their Regional Settings

The relationship of the Banff, Jasper, Yoho, and Kootenay national parks can be seen on the map (Figure 2). Differences amongst them in geology, climate, vegetation, and wildlife are the result of their location in the major ranges of the Rocky Mountains – Western, Main, and Front. The existence of the Parks ensures the protection and preservation of significant examples of the region's resources. That, in fact, is one of the reasons for the UNESCO designation of the Four Parks as a World Heritage Site in October, 1984.

Historically, the lands within the Parks have provided food, shelter, commercial routes, trade, and even spiritual support for generations of people, beginning in prehistoric times and including native Canadians and European explorers. Railway links were laid out within those lands, resources extracted, early tourists entertained, and, for the last century, national parks have been developed and managed on them.

Today, a number of highways provide year-round access to the Four Parks: the Trans-Canada and Yellowhead from the east and west; the David Thompson Highway from the east; and Highway 93 (the Banff-Windermere Highway) from the south. Car access within the Parks is available on the Icefields Parkway between the Town of Jasper and Lake Louise and between the Town of Banff and Lake Louise on the Bow Valley Parkway (Highway 1A). Railway main lines also pass through Jasper, Banff, and Yoho national parks.

Information and a variety of interpretive and public-safety services are provided to visitors by Parks Canada. Interpreting the Parks heightens understanding and enjoyment of them, and motivates visitors to use the Parks safely and without harming them. Information about Parks activities and facilities is available in many locations, including park and regional information centres, and at park wardens' offices.

Commercial services for visitors and residents, including a variety of tourist-related facilities, are concentrated in the towns of Jasper and Banff, as well as at Field, Lake Louise and in the Radium Hot Springs area.

According to the 1981 census, Jasper has 3,422 and Banff has 4,627 permanent residents. The administrative centre of Jasper National Park and the divisional headquarters of the Canadian National Railway are at Jasper, while Banff is the administrative centre for Banff National Park. Most of the administration of Yoho National Park is located in the community of Field, which has a population of approximately 300 and which also serves as an operational centre for the Canadian Pacific Railway.

The Four Mountain Parks are a recreational resource for neighbouring regions, particularly Edmonton and Calgary, and entertain visitors in all seasons with a range of frontcountry and backcountry park experiences. Major recreational activities include sightseeing, camping, horseback riding, hiking, backpacking, fishing, boating, mountaineering, and downhill and cross-country skiing.

Several provincial parks, as well as wilderness and recreation areas, border the Four Parks and help meet regional recreational demands; these include Hamber, Mount Robson and Mount Assiniboine provincial parks in British Columbia, and Alberta's Willmore Wilderness Park, the White Goat, Siffleur, and Ghost wilderness areas, and Kananaskis Country.

Much of the land bordering on the western expanse of the Four Parks is administered by the British Columbia Forest Service. Logging and, to a lesser extent, mining and recreational activity, are the principal land uses of the area. Lands east of the Mountain Park block area are, in the main, administered by the Alberta Forest Service operating under the revised Eastern Slopes Policy. Large parts of this area are zoned for multiple resource use, including logging, oil and gas extraction, and recreation. A network of roads, resulting from resource use on both sides of the Mountain Parks, has been built; it improves accessibility to formerly remote areas of the parks.

The Four Parks rely on neighbouring communities for a variety of services. In turn, the Parks' natural resources and international reputation draw tourists and are an economic mainstay to the immediate area. Moreover, because the Parks draw tourists from abroad, they bring foreign currency to Canada which, in turn, helps government raise the money required for the Parks, including that needed for preservation and resource conservation.

The Department of the Environment, through Parks Canada, participates in cooperative programs with a variety of provincial and regional agencies; these ensure that protection and management of the Four Mountain Parks are appropriate to the adjacent regions of Alberta and British Columbia, and bring social and economic benefits to residents of nearby regions.

1.1.2 Existing Levels of Use

A substantial amount of data about visitors to Banff, Jasper, Kootenay, and Yoho national parks has been gathered, much of it summarized in the background papers that were an earlier part of the planning program. As new information becomes available and new trends become apparent, they will be incorporated into any decisions made about the Mountain Parks. The following is a brief overview of existing information on use of the Parks by visitors.

Each year, some 8.5 to 10 million people visit the Four Parks; while many stop to use, enjoy, and learn about them, significant numbers simply pass through on their way to outside destinations. Summer is still the busiest season, although use is increasing at other times.

Overall attendance in the Parks increased by approximately 25 per cent beween 1970 and 1980, but has declined somewhat in the past five years. Not surprisingly, most visitors use frontcountry or road-accessible areas of the Parks, since most facilities and services are concentrated there. The Lake Louise Visitor Centre, and the towns of Banff and Jasper, receive a particularly large proportion of park visitors; in the summer months, most accommodation facilities operate at or near capacity.

Approximately five per cent of all those who enter the Four Parks travel into the backcountry either for a single day or for an overnight visit; each year, however, some 30,000 people take backcountry trips that last more than one day.

1.1.3 Responding to an Uncertain Future

Parks Canada staff have reviewed information about the volume and type of use likely to occur in the Parks in future, especially as it relates to the future of the tourism industry, particularly in Western Canada. Projected population changes in Alberta and British Columbia were also considered, and an independent analysis has been undertaken of trends in use of the Parks.

Assumptions about the future, particularly in Alberta, have changed rapidly in the past three years, primarily as the result of previously unforeseen alterations to economic conditions. Furthermore, future demand will be influenced by many factors including development of the surrounding region, fluctuations in the exchange rates, decreases in disposable income, and changes in tourism patterns and in the way Canadian tourism is marketed internationally. Clearly, the future of the Four Parks depends on a variety of volatile factors.

In order to accommodate those future changes that deviate from current projections, development levels – but not the rates at which development will occur – will be identified in the separate park management plans. To ensure that facilities are planned on the basis of realistic use-level projections and that they are consistent with resource protection, use trends will be monitored continuously throughout the park management planning process. It is likely that the private sector will also need to commission market studies before expanding already existing facilities or developing new ones.

A number of assumptions, based on a reasonable degree of certainty, are fundamental to this Management Framework. They are:

i) that the population of Alberta will continue to grow, although less rapidly than was being predicted in the 1970s and 1980s, and will stand at 3.1 million in 2000 (rather than the 3.6 million previously estimated.) This is a population increase of 35 per cent from 1982 and a 28 per cent increase within the life of the Parks plan (approximately 15 years).

ii) that use of the Mountain Parks will continue to increase and that Albertans will continue to be the primary users of the Parks.

iii) that private vehicles will continue to be the main form of transportation in the Parks and that driving for pleasure will be the most popular activity.

iv) that tourism will continue to grow regionally, nationally and internationally and that, within Canada, Alberta and British Columbia will exceed the national tourism growth rate. There will continue to be pressure from both the public and the private sector to improve the Four Parks – especially the towns of Banff and Jasper – so that they become even better tourist centres.

v) that technological innovation will continue to provide more and more people with chances to enjoy the outdoors.

vi) that people will take more long weekends and shorter, but more frequent, vacations and will want more day trips to easily accessible recreation areas. The demand for low-cost family vacations and for no-frill accommodations will probably increase, as will destination travel (i.e., trips to specific tourist attractions or sites) and repeat visits.

vii) that, between 1981 and the year 2000, the widely noted "greying of North America" will mean an increase of 54 per cent in the number of people between the ages of 45 and 59 and a six per decrease in the number of those less than 30; by 1990, one in every five adults in Canada will be more than 60 years of age. Products and services, including scenic tours, stopovers, packaged trips, and passive activities, will appeal to a population that lives longer and travels more frequently.

viii) that resource extraction will continue to be the economic base of the two Western provinces and will result in increased resource development of provincial lands immediately adjacent to the Parks.

1.1.4 Summary of the Public Consultation Program

In keeping with Parks Canada's policy of extensive public consultation throughout the public planning process, the first meetings on the subject of the Management Framework took place in 1982; a series of meetings was held in order to explain the planning program publicly, to identify issues and to obtain comments on the draft Purpose and Objectives Statement.

The second phase, in 1983, gave interested parties and organizations the opportunity to discuss planning with Parks Canada staff; the following year, phase three of the public consultations included a series of meetings in Alberta and British Columbia that reviewed the three planning options. The fourth phase was held in the winter of 1984-85, to obtain public comment on a draft of the Block Direction Statements contained in the paper titled "A Planning Scenario for the Four Mountain Parks Block". In that same period, representatives of government, of business, conservation, and recreation groups were invited to discuss the planning scenario.

In order to ensure that all interested people were involved, meetings were held in at least five different communities at each step of the public consultation process. They were advertised in local newspapers and on radio which, in turn, generated news stories in local media. A mailing list was drawn up and now includes 3,200 organizations and individuals who have asked to be informed about planning for the Parks. In addition, Parks Canada, in response to requests, met with such special interest groups as Parks for Tomorrow, Travel Alberta, and the Canadian Hostelling Association. Summaries have been prepared of the public reaction to each of the four phases of consultation.

While public consultations are an important part of decision-making, there are three other factors: first, legislation and policy (the National Parks Act, Parks Canada Policy); second, the natural resources in the Parks (flora, fauna, and land); third, regional, provincial, and national considerations, such as existing land use in the Parks, patterns of travel and visiting and the role of the Parks in the national parks system.

Takakkaw Falls, Yoho.

2. Purpose and Objectives Statement For Banff, Jasper, Kootenay, and Yoho National Parks

2. Purpose and Objectives Statement for Banff, Jasper, Kootenay, and Yoho National Parks

The Statement of Purposes and Objectives, approved in 1983, sets the stage for developing planning options and for preparing management plans for the Parks. It is a link between Parks Canada Policy and the Block Direction Statements in this Management Framework.

2.1 PURPOSE OF THE FOUR MOUNTAIN PARKS

Parks were created in Banff, Jasper, Kootenay, and Yoho in order to protect and preserve them for the appreciation, understanding, and enjoyment of present and future generations of Canadians and for other visitors; the Rocky Mountains, which form the Canadian portion of the cordillera – that mountainous spine that reaches from Alaska to Peru – contain a representative cross-section of its flora and fauna.

2.2 OBJECTIVES FOR THE PARKS

2.2.1 Protection and Preservation of Resources

Natural Resources and Processes

a) To protect and preserve the natural resources and processes occurring within Banff, Jasper, Kootenay, and Yoho;

b) To provide the highest level of protection or, where appropriate, preservation of resources and processes that are:

i) nationally or internationally significant;

ii) unique, rare, or endangered;

iii) good examples of the natural resources and processes occurring in the Canadian Rocky Mountains; and

iv) important in retaining the Parks' wilderness character.

Cultural Resources

a) To protect, preserve, recognize, or restore in an appropriate manner the cultural resources of Banff, Jasper, Kootenay, and Yoho national parks.

b) To give the highest level of attention to those resources that are:

i) nationally significant;

ii) good examples of human interaction with nature in the Canadian Rocky Mountains.

2.2.2 Appreciation, Understanding, and Enjoyment of The Parks, Their Facilities and Services

a) To provide year-round opportunities for the appreciation, understanding, and enjoyment of the Parks' natural and cultural resources while maintaining the wilderness character of Banff, Jasper, Kootenay, and Yoho national parks.

b) To provide facilities and services for day use and extended stays in the Parks, recognizing that visitors have varying skills, knowledge, economic means, and interests.

c) To provide a range of information, orientation and interpretive services and facilities to help visitors better understand, protect, and safely enjoy the Parks.

d) To continue to provide visitors with the essential facilities and services and to meet the operating needs of the Parks in the towns of Banff and Jasper, at the visitor service centre at Lake Louise, and in Field.

e) To provide those services and facilities that meet the community needs of the residents of the towns of Banff and Jasper.

2.2.3 Integrating Regional Considerations

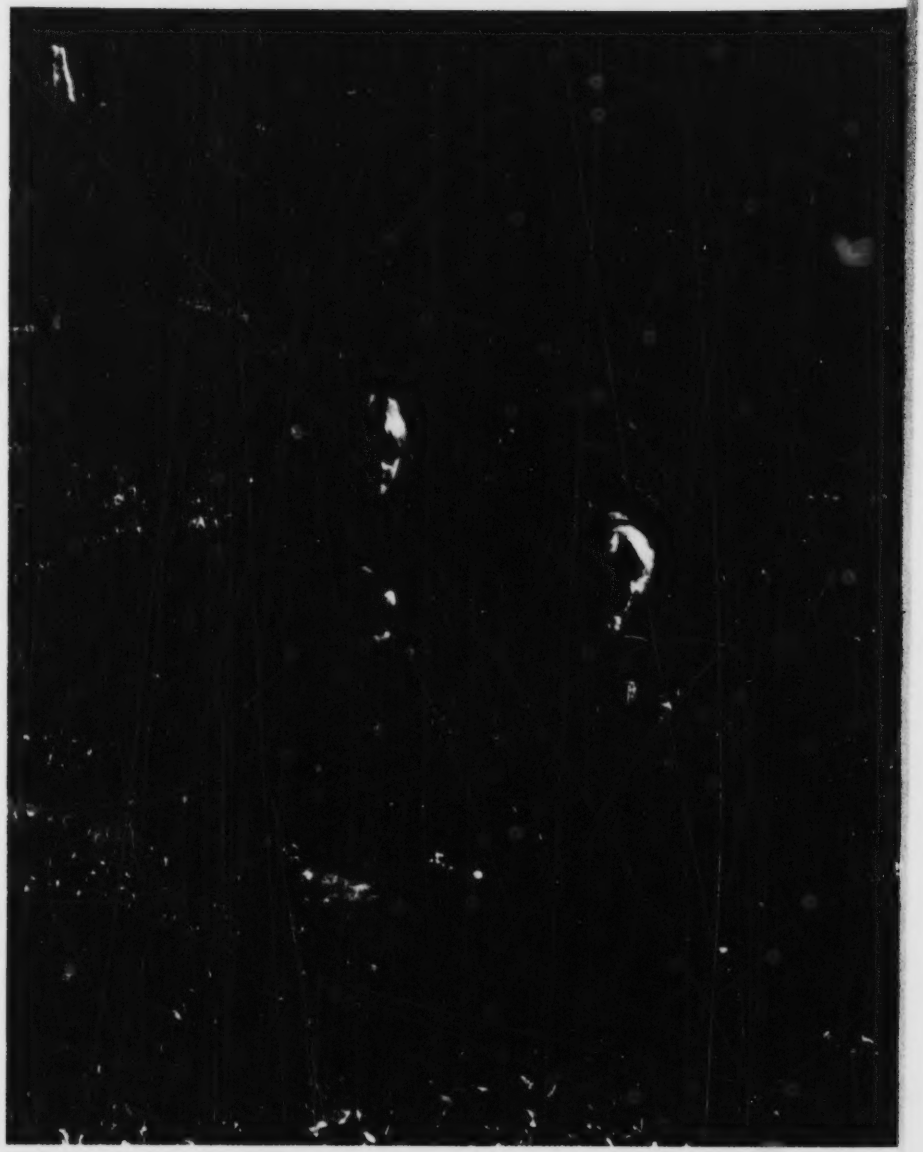
a) To coordinate the protection and management of the Four Parks with provincial governments and agencies and with those private interests that have control of lands and resources adjacent to the parks.

b) To coordinate the social and economic activities of the Parks, where feasible, with programs in the adjacent regions.

c) To coordinate the Parks' role in recreation and tourism in keeping with national programs and programs in adjacent regions, while remaining sensitive to environmental objectives.

d) To minimize the effect on the Parks' natural and cultural resources of transportation and utility developments, and of scientific and educational projects.

e) To involve people in adjacent regions in planning and plan implementation for the Four Parks.



A walk through Sunshine Meadows, Banff.

3. Directions for Protecting and Managing Resources

3. Directions for Protecting and Managing Resources

3.1 A GENERAL FRAMEWORK

Introduction

The protection of resources is Parks Canada's primary responsibility: maintaining ecological and historical integrity is a prerequisite to use of any park. That is the focus, as applied to the Four Mountain Parks, of the Direction Statements for Protecting and Managing Resources. The statements emphasize protection that is appropriate to the type, significance, and sensitivity of the Parks' resources and contain important criteria for judging acceptable levels and types of use in the Four Parks.

Parks Canada's mandate in resource protection and management is found in the National Parks Act and is further refined in the Parks Canada Policy, the World Conservation Strategy, the Canadian Heritage Rivers System, the Natural Resource Management Process, and management directives, including the Environmental Assessment and Review Process. Direction Statements for Protecting and Managing Resources establish block-level objectives that can then be used in the individual management plans to develop detailed objectives for protecting and managing the resources for each park.

The Block Direction Statements are based on an analysis of the biophysical (ecological) inventories of natural resources in the Four Parks, which, with other resource data, will be further evaluated in order to set out park-specific protection and management goals.

Block Direction Statements

A. *The Direction Statements for Resource Protection and Management take precedence over implementation of Direction Statements for Visitor Understanding, Appreciation, and Enjoyment (see Section 4) because the need to protect resources limits the amount, type, and level of acceptable use in the Four Mountain Parks.*

B. *The management of facilities and visitors cannot be isolated from protection of the Parks' resources, and such management must safeguard plant and animal habitats, as well as the physical surroundings and aesthetics of the Parks.*

3.1.1 Protecting Physiographic and Geologic Resources

Introduction

The Four Parks contain physiographic and geological resources that are regionally, nationally, and internationally significant. Any component of the Parks may be designated as significant because of its scenic value, uniqueness, fragility, or its scientific or ecological importance. Protecting these resources and the natural processes that modify them will be considered a high priority. The emphasis on preservation does not necessarily prohibit visitor use but makes it subject to the protection of the resources.

Block Direction Statements

A. *Physiographic and geologic resources in each Park will be evaluated to determine which are of significance, either within the Park or nationally, and those so designated will be protected appropriately.*

B. *Such internationally important features and landforms as the Burgess Shales in Yoho, and similar fossil beds of the Cathedral Escarpment, will be given special consideration in management of the Parks.*

3.1.2 Restoration of Sites That Have Already Been Damaged

Introduction

Human activity can permanently scar the landscape in ways that damage the ecology and diminish the park experience for visitors. Efforts will be made to minimize the consequences of existing problems and to restore previously damaged sites to their natural state. This can be accomplished actively – by scarifying, seeding, etc. – or passively – by permitting an area to be restored to a natural state.

Block Direction Statements

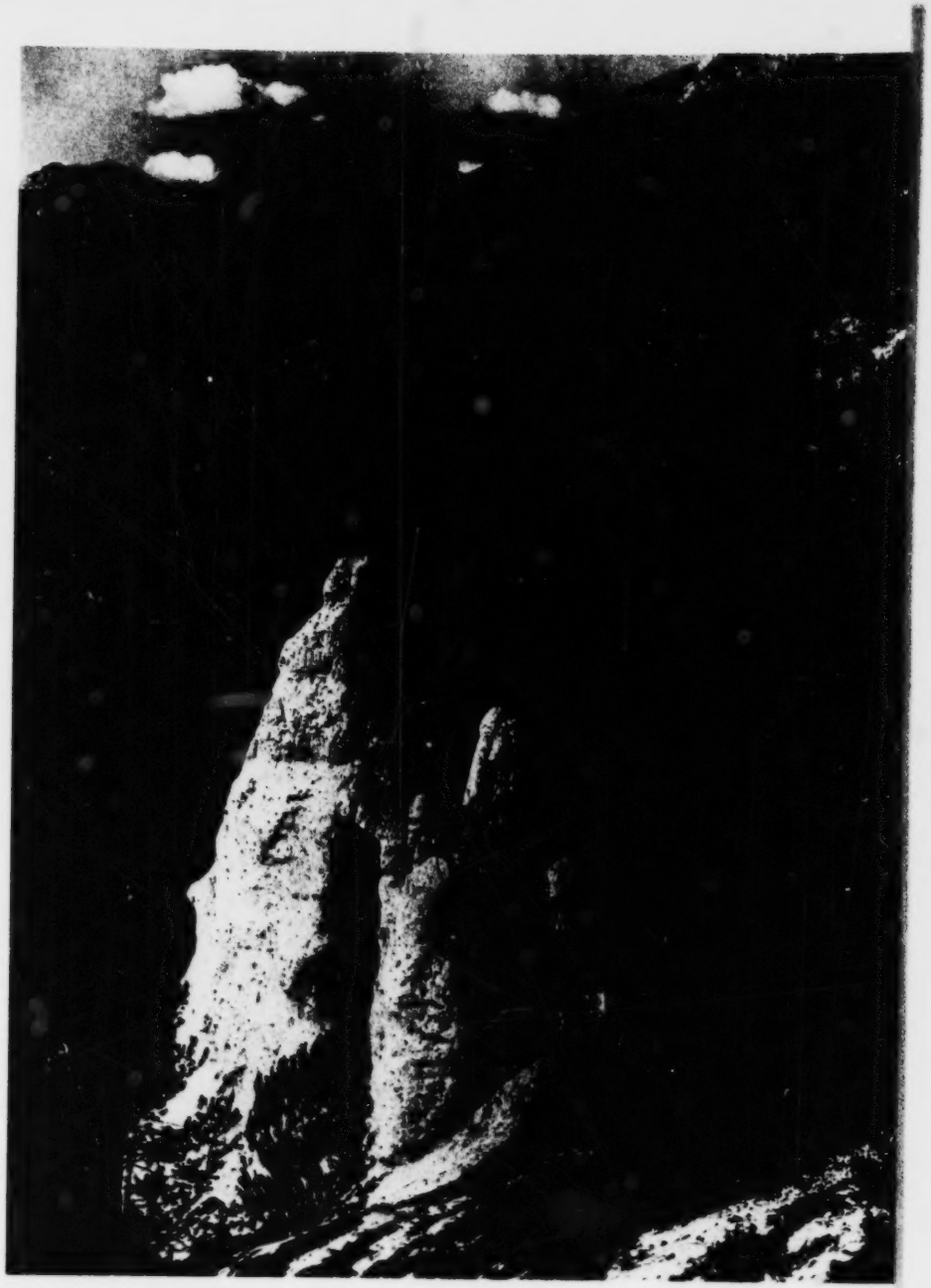
A. *No activity that disturbs a landform will be approved until after all necessary rehabilitation plans have been put in place.*

B. *Using the Resource Management Process, each Park will identify and set priorities for those areas requiring active rehabilitation; in setting those priorities, consideration will be given to the visible degree of impairment, the extent of damage to the natural habitat, the degree of disruption to watershed, and the potential for continuing damage to the terrain.*

3.1.3 Hydrological Resources

Introduction

The Four Mountain Parks are located at the hydrological apex of North America, protecting the headwaters of systems that are a major water source for Western Canada's urban and agricultural areas. As more people visit and use the Parks, there is an increased danger that waters in the Parks will be polluted. Parks Canada works closely with other agencies of the Department of the Environment, including the Environmental Protection Service and the Inland Waters



The Hoodoos of Banff.

Directorate, to establish water-quality standards and to monitor and mitigate the impact of pollution on hydrological resources.

Watersheds within the Parks, with their unregulated flow and naturally evolving water, are possible. The Athabasca and North Saskatchewan rivers are being designated as Canadian Heritage Rivers, at least in part because of their value as watershed. Preparations are underway to designate the Kicking Horse River a Canadian Heritage River.

Block Direction Statements

A. *Parks facilities and activities will operate in the context of continuously and rigorously protecting the Parks' aquatic resources.*

B. *Water quality will be monitored and, wherever necessary, all measures will be taken to eliminate or prevent pollution.*

C. *Any necessary modification of stream channels or flows will be made in ways that minimize water siltation, loss of habitat, and changes to natural flow patterns.*

3.1.4 Protecting Associated Vegetation

Introduction

A high priority will be given to protecting species of vegetation that are endangered, rare, fragile or unique. Management and use activities will be limited by the fragility of surrounding vegetation, and the management of the Parks must be carried out in a way that causes the least possible interference with natural vegetation.

The Parks can be divided into three eco-regions: alpine, sub-alpine and montane. The last-named, which occurs at the lowest altitudes and has the warmest, driest climate, forms only a small area within the Parks and is important both to humans and to wildlife. It includes much of the grassland in the Parks, as well as the area in which major land uses (transportation corridors, towns, campgrounds, and day use) occur.

The montane eco-region plays an important ecological role in the Parks, providing a major habitat for several wildlife species, and is the site for many existing facilities and uses. Limited in size, it requires special management and extra attention to any activity with the potential to alter the montane eco-region, directly or indirectly.

Block Direction Statements

A. *Unique, rare, endangered species or associations between various kinds of vegetation will be identified so that appropriate measures can be taken to protect them.*

B. *Because of the importance of the montane eco-region for both resource protection and visitor use, special measures will be developed to minimize the harmful consequences of current or past uses.*

C. *In order to increase understanding of the importance of montane areas and to develop methods of managing and protecting them, further research will be undertaken.*

D. *In each Park, plans for managing vegetation will be developed to:*

identify areas that contain important vegetation associations;

monitor and evaluate the state of vegetation associations and ameliorate any undesirable changes to vegetation that result from human interference.

E. *No activity that might harm vegetation can be approved before rehabilitation plans have been made.*

3.1.5 Managing Fire

Introduction

In the past, fires were never permitted in any parks because they were assumed to be harmful in all circumstances; the fact, however, is that suppression of the natural fire cycle interfered with the ecological system in the Four Mountain Parks; Parks Canada's policy now permits the use of fire in restoring natural ecological balance. (Unplanned wildfires that threaten people, park facilities, or neighbouring areas are, of course, always aggressively suppressed.)

Block Direction Statements

A. *Parks Canada will manage and maintain areas of natural vegetation that depend on fire as part of their natural cycle. A comprehensive fire-management plan will be developed for each of the Four Parks and will require:*

– continued research into the use of fire as a management tool and into the role it plays in the various types of vegetation associations in the Parks;

– the use of planned ignition fires ("prescribed burning") in selected areas where they are needed to maintain natural vegetation, and in order to gain further experience and knowledge about the nature of fires;

– careful selection of areas in which random ignition fires will be permitted to burn; and

– aggressive suppression of unplanned wildfires that threaten Park facilities, public safety or neighbouring lands.

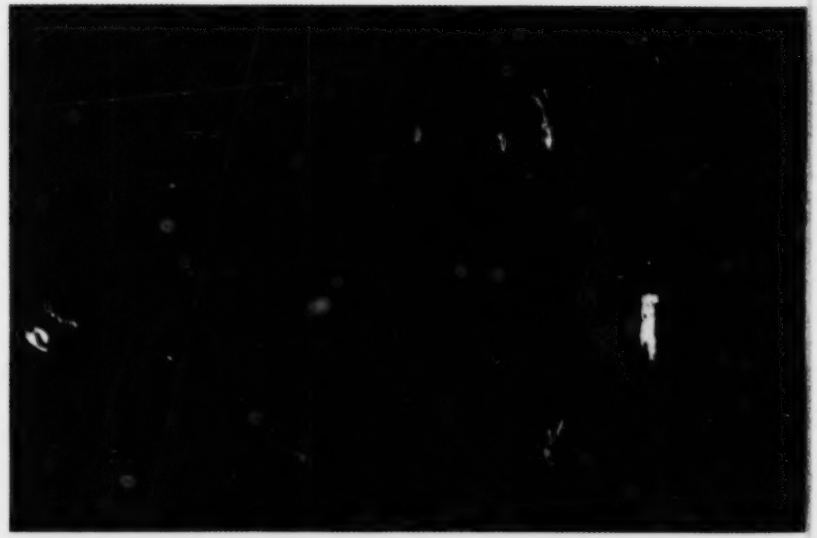
3.1.6 Protecting Wildlife

Introduction

Wildlife is dependent on a complex and tightly interwoven set of ecological factors, including protection of habitats; those habitats, in turn, result from the interplay of such ecological factors as vegetation, water, climate, fire, and physiographic features. Wildlife management, therefore, cannot take place in isolation: it must be coordinated with the management of the other park resources. The management of those park resources, including wildlife, depends, in turn, on managing visitors since it is even well-intentioned visitors and the facilities and services that all visitors require that may easily damage the fragile components of the ecological system.

Block Direction Statement

A. *Research, including systematic monitoring of wildlife and their habitats, will provide an ecological basis for sound wildlife management.*



Grizzly Bears in Cascade Valley, Banff.

B. *Areas that contain important wildlife habitats will be carefully protected. The criteria to be applied when identifying habitats as important will include the following facts:*

– that the area contains very few habitats for certain species; that those that do exist are not large and, without them, these species would perish;

– that the area is used as a breeding site by rare or threatened species;

– that the area is a vitally important seasonal habitat for wildlife.

– such important wildlife habitats will be identified in the resource-management plans developed for each of the Parks; this designation, although not necessarily precluding visitors, will carefully protect essential characteristics of the habitat.

C. *Parks Canada will cooperate with other agencies in management planning for wildlife for which they share responsibility.*

D. *Unique, rare, or endangered species, or those sensitive to human activities, will be given the greatest possible protection, including, although not necessarily limited to: grizzly bears, woodland caribou, and large predators and raptors.*

3.1.7 Sport Fishing

Introduction

Sport fishing is a recognized, acceptable recreational activity in national parks, subject to the need to protect aquatic ecosystems and to maintain adequate populations of native species of fish. The waters of Banff, Jasper, Kootenay, and Yoho, which have a low level of productivity because of their cold temperatures, contain a fragile and easily over-exploited fishery.

Block Direction Statement

A. *The resource management plan to be developed for each Park will identify appropriate sport fishing locations and plans for maintaining fish populations in those locations.*

3.1.8 Aesthetics

Introduction

People speak enthusiastically of the "park experience", but what, precisely, do they mean? While tastes and definitions vary, the "park experience" is the individual response to a park's essential elements: scenery, clean air, water, the presence of wildlife, and the sheer expanse of landscape. Maintaining those elements, then, is a basic necessity of managing Banff, Jasper, Kootenay, and Yoho national parks and of the entire parks system and requires skilled land use planning.

Block Direction Statements

A. *The aesthetic effects of existing and proposed land use planning must be evaluated and action taken to minimize those that are negative and to enhance those that are positive.*

B. *The aesthetic quality of the Parks will be given highest priority in all future activities and the impact of daily operations on the aesthetics of the Parks must be minimized.*

C. *One of the management priorities is the development of an architectural motif for each Park so that its essential character is maintained and even enhanced by such heritage-sensitive measures as a signage policy and a main street program, similar to that of Heritage Canada in several communities across this country.*

3.1.9 Cultural Resources

Introduction

Parks Canada's policy commits it to protecting cultural resources within national parks in keeping with its mandate for national historic sites or national historic parks. Cultural resources include archaeological and palaeontological sites, historic buildings and objects.

Although a number of nationally and regionally significant cultural resources have been identified in the parks, a complete and detailed inventory of them has never been made; in the absence of an adequate data base, therefore, careful attention must be given to the impact park activities may have on cultural resources.

When a cultural resource inventory for each park is developed, every effort should be made to include information that is needed for existing resource protection under the Environmental Assessment and Review Process, and the Federal Heritage Building Policy.

Block Direction Statements

A. *An inventory will be made of the cultural resources in each Park, in order to:*

– identify the location and nature of the cultural resource;

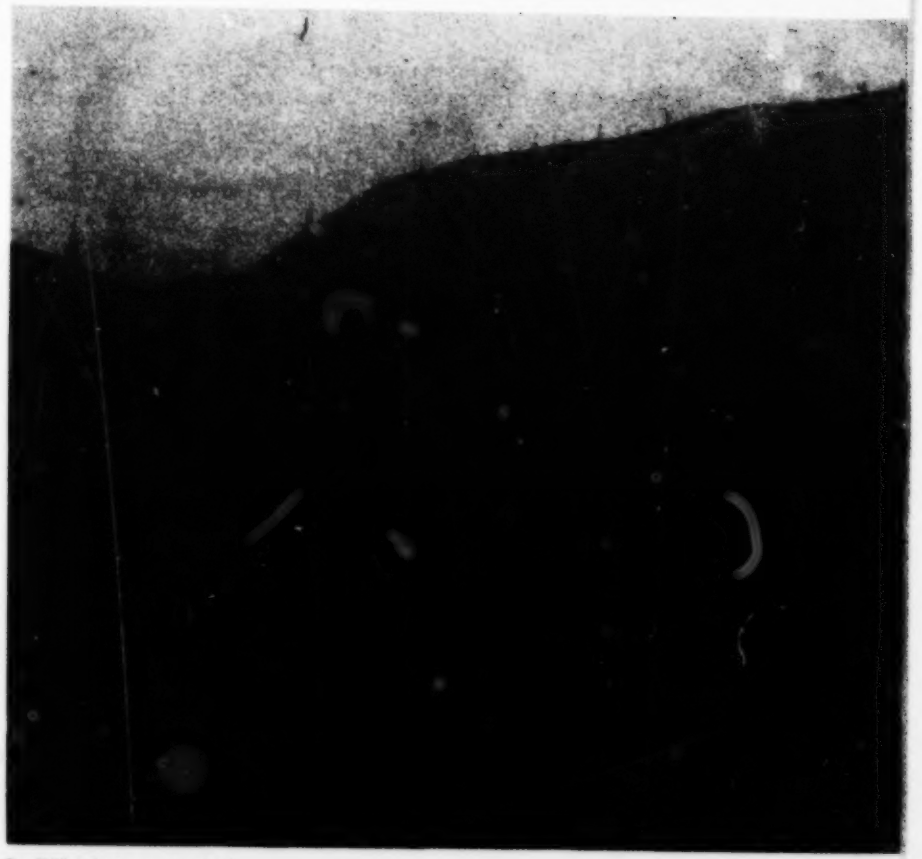
– evaluate its significance within the Park as well as in the region, the province, and Canada;

– coordinate the evaluation process, when it is appropriate to do so, with other groups, including provincial agencies and the Historic Sites and Monuments Board;

– suggest measures for protecting and preserving significant cultural resources; and

– develop a cultural resource-management plan.

B. *The policies of the Federal Heritage Buildings Review Office will be overhauled as part of an effort by the Department of the Environment to strengthen heritage preservation throughout government in all matters under its jurisdiction. Those policies will be followed strictly in the management of the Parks, in order to ensure that valuable cultural assets are protected and to set an example for other parts of the federal government.*



Banff Hot Springs, circa 1880.

3.1.10 Protecting Natural Areas

Introduction

The Four Mountain Parks include backcountry of nearly 20,000 square kilometres; the level of development within that area ranges from no visitor services or facilities up to the presence of commercial lodges and shelters. The following Direction Statement applies only to the management of those areas without visitor facilities or services.

These natural areas have a unique, intangible aesthetic quality: the visitor to a wild and pristine world has the chance to experience the natural environment on its own terms. But the value of those areas to humans depends on the maintenance of that natural environment. Moreover, natural areas contain scientifically important information about ecological processes that are unaltered by human activity. The scientific and human value of such primitive areas depends, to some extent, on their size, which must be large enough to retain ecological integrity and be defined by recognizable topographic boundaries.

Block Direction Statement

A. *Large wilderness areas, with no facilities, will be retained in the Four Mountain Parks and will:*

– ideally, be defined by such recognizable topographic/ecological boundaries as watershed boundaries;

– be preserved and protected as examples of landscape and natural systems that are unaltered by human activity; and

– provide visitors to the Parks with opportunities to experience the natural environment on its own terms and without compromising its pristine character.

3.1.11 Inter/Intra-Agency Cooperation

Introduction

Management of heritage resources in each Park must be coordinated with that in the other Parks and with provincial agencies and private interests that control lands and resources adjacent to the Parks.

Block Direction Statement

A. *In order to enhance resource protection, cooperative programs will be developed among the Parks and with other agencies that are responsible for managing adjacent lands.*

3.1.12 Air Quality

Introduction

The Four Mountain Parks contain national railway and highway corridors, towns, and visitor service centres, all of which affect air quality. Although air pollution is not a major problem in the Parks, the mountainous terrain often creates air inversions that concentrate air pollutants in valley bottoms. Air pollution is caused by carbon monoxide from motor vehicles; wood smoke from the towns, campgrounds and forest fires; and the construction and maintenance of transportation corridors. As facilities expand and visitor use increases, the potential for damage to the quality of air also increases.

Future expansion of facilities and increased visitor use will threaten the quality of air and water in the Parks – already identified as essential aesthetic elements – unless care is taken to prevent that from happening; the following measure, therefore, is given the highest priority.

Block Direction Statement

A. *Air and water quality will be closely monitored to ensure that any deterioration in them is detected quickly; when a problem exists, the full resources of the Department of the Environment will be employed, in concert with other relevant government departments, either federal or provincial, in order to minimize or prevent pollution.*

4. Direction for Visitor Understanding, Appreciation, and Enjoyment

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Having examined resource protection and management, Parks Canada's primary mandate, the Framework turns now to consider the direction that ought to be taken in regard to the other subject of that mandate – providing opportunities for visitors to understand, appreciate and enjoy Canada's parks. More specific direction statements (on such topics as access, communication services, and the role of the towns in the Four Parks), are provided in block-level strategies for achieving the direction set out in the Framework.

Athabasca Glacier, Columbia Icefields.

4.1 A GENERAL FRAMEWORK

4.1.1 Visitor Use

Introduction

In making decisions about how to respond to new or increasing recreational demands, it will be necessary to analyse whether proposed uses are appropriate to the conditions and limits within which such demands can be met. The Management Framework recognizes that limits to visitor use and to establishing facilities must be precise because the use and enjoyment of the Parks depends on maintaining the quality of the environment.

It is expected that, in the next 15 years, demand for opportunities to enjoy and use the Parks will grow at a modest but steady rate. Within the limits imposed by environmental and social considerations, such opportunities can be provided for a greater number of people and, where it is appropriate, increased use in non-peak periods will be encouraged.

The modest growth in demand for opportunities to enjoy the Parks is based on current trends but there are other possibilities that require consideration. First, demand may increase at a higher rate than expected, in which case the defined expansion of facilities and services would be accelerated, within fiscal and operational and environmental constraints. Second, the demand for specific or park-related activities may diminish and would require an appropriate change in planning, in design and operation of facilities, and in providing services. Further development will not occur unless the first assumption, an expected increase in demand, occurs. Detailed responses to the various possibilities will be contained in the individual Park management plans.

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4.1.2 The Quality of Park Opportunities

Introduction

People have been enjoying the Parks for more than one hundred years but, today, services and facilities do not always meet modern expectations or standards. In some cases, facilities have become run down and require improved maintenance or upgrading and, therefore, steps must be taken to enhance the quality of opportunities available to visitors by improving such facilities or services.

Obviously, national parks cannot accommodate the expectations of all visitors, but their numbers can be expanded without jeopardizing the heritage-resource values of the Four Mountain Parks. In some cases, the needs of only a small proportion of the Parks' visitors are being met and services and facilities must be increased, in recognition of the diversity of interests, ages, skills, and physical capability of the Parks' visitors. Priority will be given to improving opportunities available for activities that depend on the Parks' natural resources and that require a minimum of built facilities.

Particular attention will be paid to the needs of the elderly and the handicapped, for whom the park experience is often particularly rewarding.

There is also a need to provide more and better communications services (information and education) about all aspects of these Parks – their resources, facilities, and recreational opportunities. Communication services must be developed to meet information requirements of park visitors, and to encourage appropriate uses and activities. In addition, information and education will be used to achieve park-management objectives, where appropriate, in preference to more restrictive visitor-management techniques such as the enforcement of regulations.

Block Direction Statements

A. *Services and facilities will be upgraded to provide better opportunity for enjoyment of the Parks to a broader range of visitors.*

B. *Communications services, both to Parks' visitors and to the general public, will be increased in order to help people understand, appreciate, and enjoy the Four Mountain Parks.*

4.1.3 Relationships with Regions

Introduction

The Four Mountain Parks and adjacent lands share various environmental, economic, and social relationships. Policies and actions by Parks Canada, therefore, can affect adjacent areas in the same way that initiatives by provincial, regional, and municipal governments and by the private sector can profoundly affect the Parks.

For example, the growth of towns within the Parks has an important effect on such adjacent provincial communities as Canmore. As a result of Parks Canada's "need to reside" policy and the limited opportunities for new housing, the Canmore area has grown as a residential centre; other Parks Canada policies have led to the development of ski areas outside Park boundaries.

Much of the bordering land in British Columbia and Alberta is designated for multiple resource use, including logging, oil and gas extraction, and recreation. The roads that result from these activities are allowing increased public access to formerly remote areas of the Parks. Alberta's recent revisions to the Eastern Slopes Policy have an increased emphasis on tourism and recreation that is potentially significant for the parks at Banff and Jasper.

Because it is not possible to retain the integrity of heritage-resource values in the Parks, and at the same time meet all the demands visitors place on them, high priority will be given to coordinating land-management strategies with the adjoining provinces. Some such initiatives are already under way: the governments of Canada and Alberta recently signed an Economic and Regional Development Agreement; it will establish means for achieving greater federal-provincial cooperation and coordination in the economic and regional development of all industrial sectors, including tourism, in Alberta. As a first step in meeting the objectives of the Agreement, Parks Canada will encourage and support the development of regional resource management, recreation and tourism plans. This is in keeping with the emphasis within the Department of the Environment on cooperating with provincial governments on a range of issues of mutual interest.

The existence of the Parks in the Rocky Mountains is important regionally because it assures the protection of heritage resources and the retention of large tracts of wilderness; it is only in these Parks, after all, that large areas of relatively untouched land, representative of the Rockies, are protected by legislation with the incalculable ecological and social benefits that result.

Fortunately, the tourism industry itself recognizes that its own long-term interests are damaged by unbridled exploitation of the Parks for tourism purposes. Parks' assets – either natural or built – must be preserved for the use and enjoyment of future generations of Canadians, to whom the Parks belong, and of visitors, even if such preservation limits the number of people who can be accommodated.

Block Direction Statements

A. *Parks Canada will actively seek to develop land-management strategies in cooperation with provincial, regional, and municipal governments. Regional planning and development programs will be encouraged, in order to define roles and relationships between various parties, to reduce pressure on the Mountain Parks and, because the Four Mountain Parks cannot meet all the needs of visitors, to encourage development in surrounding regions.*

B. *The primary role of the Four Mountain Parks in the Rocky Mountain region is to protect heritage resources and to retain and preserve existing wilderness.*

4.2 COMMUNICATIONS SERVICES

4.2.1 General Comments

Introduction

Effective communication helps members of the public enjoy national parks and helps Parks Canada protect park resources. Communications services are currently provided at several levels, corresponding to the various components of the park experience. These are:

– preliminary awareness of the Parks and trip planning, using television short subjects, publications, school/teacher programs;

– park orientation and information, which is provided at information centres, park gates, and wardens' offices;

– interpretation, including campfire talks, publications, audio-visual programs;

– public involvement, using various cooperative activities, volunteer programs, and public participation in planning exercises (including those leading to this Management Framework).

There is a need to improve and expand public communications about the Parks, making more appropriate use of existing facilities and services to provide better information and education for visitors.

In keeping with Parks Canada's overall mandate, communications services will emphasize protection of park resources, using information and interpretation to manage and educate visitors, in an attempt to minimize resource impairment. In addition, communication facilities and services will be located to ensure that they have the least possible impact on natural and cultural resources.

Direction for communications has been provided under four headings: Heritage Resources, Opportunities for Enjoyment and Use; Safe and Appropriate Use; Public Involvement. The titles reflect the major messages to be communicated and the information required by visitors.

Direction is provided in this Management Framework for areas in which improvement or expansion of services is required; no changes are planned in areas where they are adequate. More specific direction will be provided in the individual park-management plans.

Block Direction Statement

A. *Communications services will be expanded and improved in the Four Mountain Parks, in order to meet the needs both of visitors and of Parks Canada itself, and for the purpose of enhancing people's appreciation of the Parks' heritage and environment.*

4.2.2 Heritage Resources

Introduction

The long-term protection of the parks' heritage resources depends on public awareness, understanding, and appreciation of these resources. At present, information on heritage resources is provided in the parks through interpretive programs such as brochures, campfire talks, and audio-visual presentations at information centres. Extension programs such as school/teacher projects and television shorts make people outside the parks more aware of heritage resources. More emphasis will be placed on extension services for the Four Parks, because improved awareness and understanding of the resources that parks protect are beneficial to parks generally.

Other agencies, such as commercial operators, provincial and federal tourism agencies, and travel agencies, promote awareness of the Four Mountain Parks. By increasing efforts to provide heritage-resource information in conjunction with these marketing initiatives, Parks Canada strives to enhance visitors' knowledge and support of the parks' protection mandate while helping to give an accurate picture of what the parks have to offer.

There is a need to coordinate interpretation of the Four Parks on a block basis, since many visitors travel to more than one park and some heritage-resource messages are common to them all; and there is a need to ensure that as many visitors as possible are reached with important interpretive messages. An effort will be made to ensure that heritage-resource information is made more easily accessible to visitors.

Block Direction Statements

A. *More emphasis will be placed on increasing awareness, understanding, and appreciation of the Parks' heritage resources. A priority will be placed on extension programs to serve that function.*

B. *Efforts will be made to ensure that Parks Canada's mandate and appropriate resource messages are stressed by other agencies in developing marketing messages that involve the Four Mountain Parks.*

C. *Coordination of interpretation for all Four Parks will be improved, to ensure that complete resource messages are communicated to visitors, and to avoid duplication of effort.*

D. *More heritage-resource information will be made available in the Parks, in places where visitors congregate and where they come into contact with park resources (e.g., visitor centres, towns, trailheads, accommodation facilities, roadside pull-offs). Efforts will be made, where appropriate, to encourage visitors to experience resources first hand.*

4.2.3 Opportunities for Enjoyment and Use

Introduction

Public enjoyment and appropriate use of parks are dependent on an awareness and a realistic understanding of the kinds of opportunities that national parks provide. Information on those opportunities (primarily about the availability of existing facilities, services and recreational activities) is required at various locations and can be of varying degrees of detail. Outside the parks, information is frequently requested for the planning of trips, while inside the parks, information is required to orient visitors and to increase their enjoyment of park opportunities. Information on opportunities is also used by management to distribute visitors more evenly throughout the Four Parks.

Such information is provided by a variety of sources, including Parks Canada, park commercial operators, provincial and federal tourism agencies, and travel agents. At times, the visitor receives confusing and conflicting information. Parks Canada must take a coordinating role, to ensure that more accurate and consistent information is provided. Such new technology as computerized information systems may be required.

The need to improve coordination amongst parks is particularly important in providing information about backcountry opportunities, because each Park has adopted its own backcountry management strategy.

A number of Parks Canada information/orientation facilities in the surrounding region and within the Parks provide information on opportunities, but there are gaps that need to be filled before there is a complete system that serves visitors at the various stages of their park experience.

Block Direction Statements

A. *Parks Canada will improve coordination of public information, both within the agency and between it and other government agencies and commercial interests. Communication of information will be improved and it will be more accurate and up to date.*

B. *An integrated system of information/orientation will be completed. Emphasis will be placed on providing information through regional centres (Calgary, Edmonton, and Vancouver); orientation facilities at or near each Park gate; and information/interpretation facilities at places where visitors congregate (towns, visitor centres, accommodation facilities, trailheads and roadsides).*

C. *Information offered in each Park will emphasize the opportunities particular to it; information about the other three Parks and about the surrounding region will be a secondary priority.*

D. *Emphasis will be placed on coordinating and improving backcountry information for the Four Parks as a block, in order to make clear to visitors the backcountry-use requirements in each of the Four.*

4.2.4 Safe and Appropriate Use

Introduction

In order to help resolve the conflict between preservation and use, communications will emphasize management practices affecting park use and appropriate behaviour. Explaining restrictions and asking for appropriate behaviour increase visitor safety by improving compliance with park regulations, and helps foster a sense of responsibility for park resources. Education about necessary skills and equipment keeps visitors safe, increases their enjoyment, and encourages them to participate in park activities. Often, outdoor clubs and educational institutions are best able to provide outdoor-skills education in these Parks.

Block Direction Statements

A. *Information about management practices that affect park use, and about appropriate ethical considerations regarding parks and the environment, will be increased and improved; these will be provided as part of the information on park opportunities and heritage resources.*

B. *Emphasis will be placed on improving information about the skills and equipment necessary for park activities. Parks Canada will encourage others (guides, outfitters, volunteers, educational institutions, outdoor clubs, etc.) to provide skill-development programs.*

4.2.5 Public Involvement

Introduction

There are several ways for members of the public to become involved with park management and operation: volunteer programs, cooperating associations, by commenting on park visits and participating in reviews of policies and plans. In these ways, members of the public gain a sense of achievement and stewardship, valuable job experience, and a chance to affect park management and operation; for its part, Parks Canada gains outside expertise, the benefits of increased understanding by the public of its management practices and concerns, and development of a stronger support for its mandate.

Residents of neighbouring regions are the most frequent users of the Four Mountain Parks. It is particularly important that they be kept informed of current practices and concerns, and provided with opportunities to make their views known.

Block Direction Statements

A. *An increased effort will be made to ensure that all Canadians, especially those who live in neighbouring regions, are aware of current park practices and concerns, as well as of ways in which they can become involved in the management and operation of parks.*

B. *Mechanisms for obtaining comments from visitors will be improved, in order to assist Parks Canada in making decisions.*

4.3 BACKCOUNTRY OPPORTUNITIES AND FACILITIES

4.3.1 Range of Opportunities

Introduction

Visitors to these national parks seek a range of backcountry opportunities: some prefer the amenities of commercially-operated lodges, while others seek solitude and the challenge of backpacking or mountaineering. Backcountry opportunities are provided in lands classed as Zone II, Wilderness and Zone III, Natural Environment. (See Appendix B for a description of zoning.)

In this planning program, backcountry opportunities have been divided into three broad categories: the most heavily used and developed areas provide semi-primitive opportunities. Facilities such as commercial lodges, large-group camps and trail shelters are acceptable in these areas but "site hardening" (i.e., laying out gravel paths, fencing campsites and pathways) and vigorous management of visitors are required. At the opposite end of the spectrum are wildlands; in these relatively undisturbed areas, there are no facilities, random camping is permitted and the few trails are minimally maintained; visitors are assisted through information and education. Primitive opportunities are associated with areas between the other two categories and they include designated camping, but no sheltered accommodation other than alpine huts. The backcountry opportunity concept is based on the recognition that there is a combination of physical, biological, sociological and administrative conditions that gives recreational value to an area. (A more complete description of the backcountry opportunity concept is appended.)

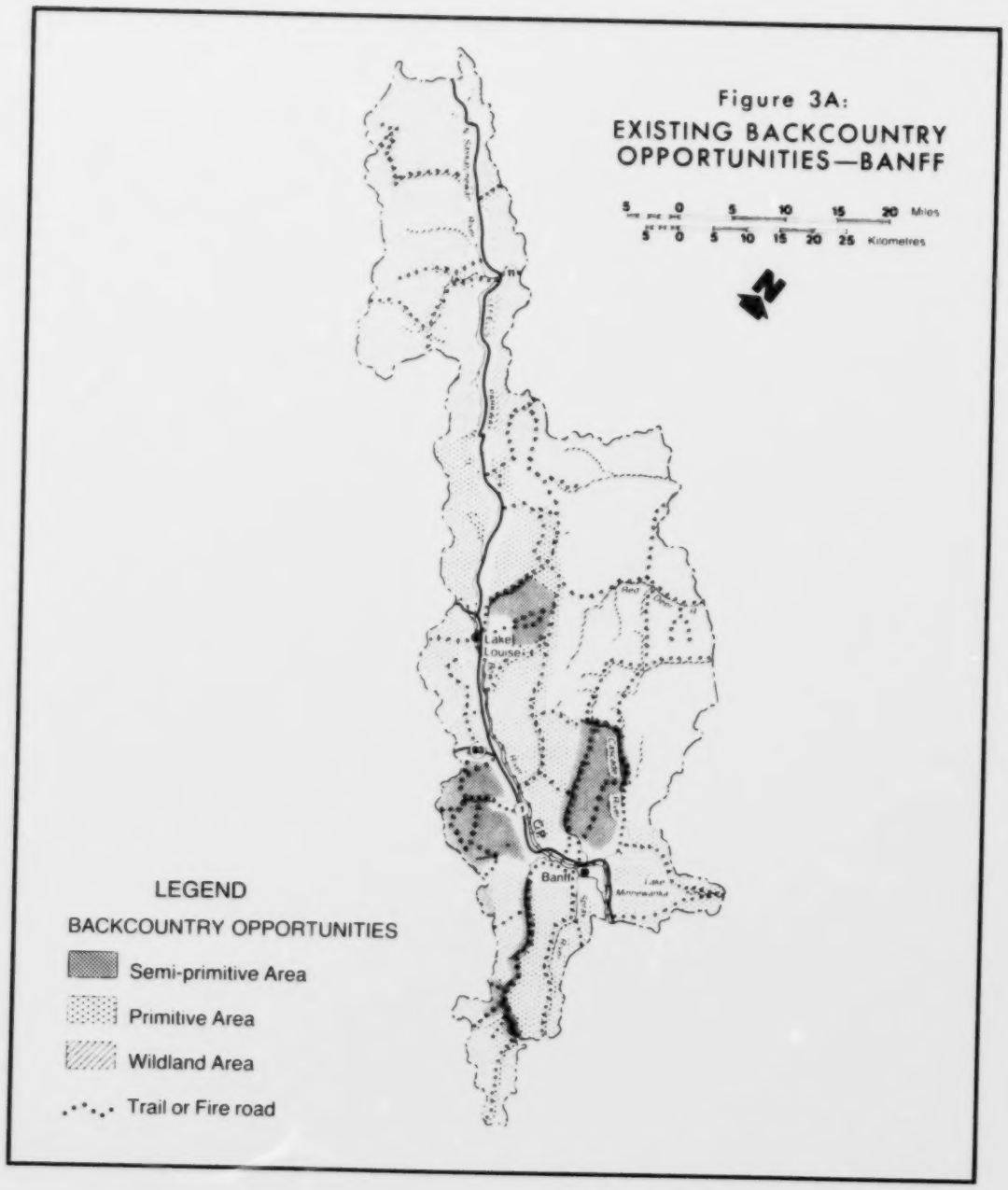


Figure 3A:
EXISTING BACKCOUNTRY OPPORTUNITIES—BANFF
5 0 5 10 15 20 Miles
5 0 5 10 15 20 25 Kilometres
N
Lake Louise
Banff
Lake Minnewanka
LEGEND
BACKCOUNTRY OPPORTUNITIES
Semi-primitive Area
Primitive Area
Wildland Area
Trail or Fire road

The existing range of opportunities is shown in Figure 3. Semi-primitive opportunities are available at present in all of the Four Parks except Kootenay; there are large wildland areas in Banff and Jasper, but only small pockets in Kootenay and Yoho. The Four Parks have more areas providing wildland than other types of opportunities, followed by primitive, then semi-primitive. Semi-primitive areas receive most use, followed by primitive and wildland.

There are few semi-primitive areas surrounding the Parks, except in British Columbia's Mount Robson and Mount Assiniboine provincial parks; the vast majority of lands bordering provincial parks provide primitive opportunities. Wildland opportunities in the region surrounding the Four Parks are decreasing as lands are committed to resource extraction.

More than 97 per cent of the lands in the Four Mountain Parks are managed as backcountry areas. (The figure is based on an approximation of lands that could be classed as Zone II, Wilderness and Zone III, Natural Environment.) Existing levels of backcountry use account for about one-half of one per cent of all visits to these Parks; despite the vast expanses of land available, the majority of use is limited to a few weekends and a few attractive sites.

The backcountry areas of these Four Parks will continue to be managed to meet the needs of visitors of diverse interests, ages and levels of skill. Within defined limits, new initiatives will be taken to provide opportunities for more visitors and for a broader range of visitors. An assessment of available regional opportunities, of public comments received during this planning program and of current visitor-use patterns indicates the need to increase emphasis on providing semi-primitive opportunities.

Increased benefits will be provided, to visitors seeking opportunities consistent with semi-primitive areas; action will be taken to increase the intensity of use in existing semi-primitive areas, by expanding some of them slightly, and by providing a limited number of new semi-primitive areas. As a result, there will be a small reduction in the size of areas providing primitive opportunities. Most use will continue to be confined to a relatively small proportion of the total backcountry area. This concentration of use will be achieved, however, with the utmost regard for the protection of heritage-resource values. Environmentally sensitive site planning, site hardening, improved information and education programs and increased management of visitors will be required for success in achieving this new direction.

This new emphasis is not in any respect an abrogation of Parks Canada's commitment to protecting traditional wilderness resources, which has strong public support. Approximately 25 per cent of the backcountry areas in these Parks will continue to be managed to provide primitive opportunities and 67 per cent to provide wildland opportunities.

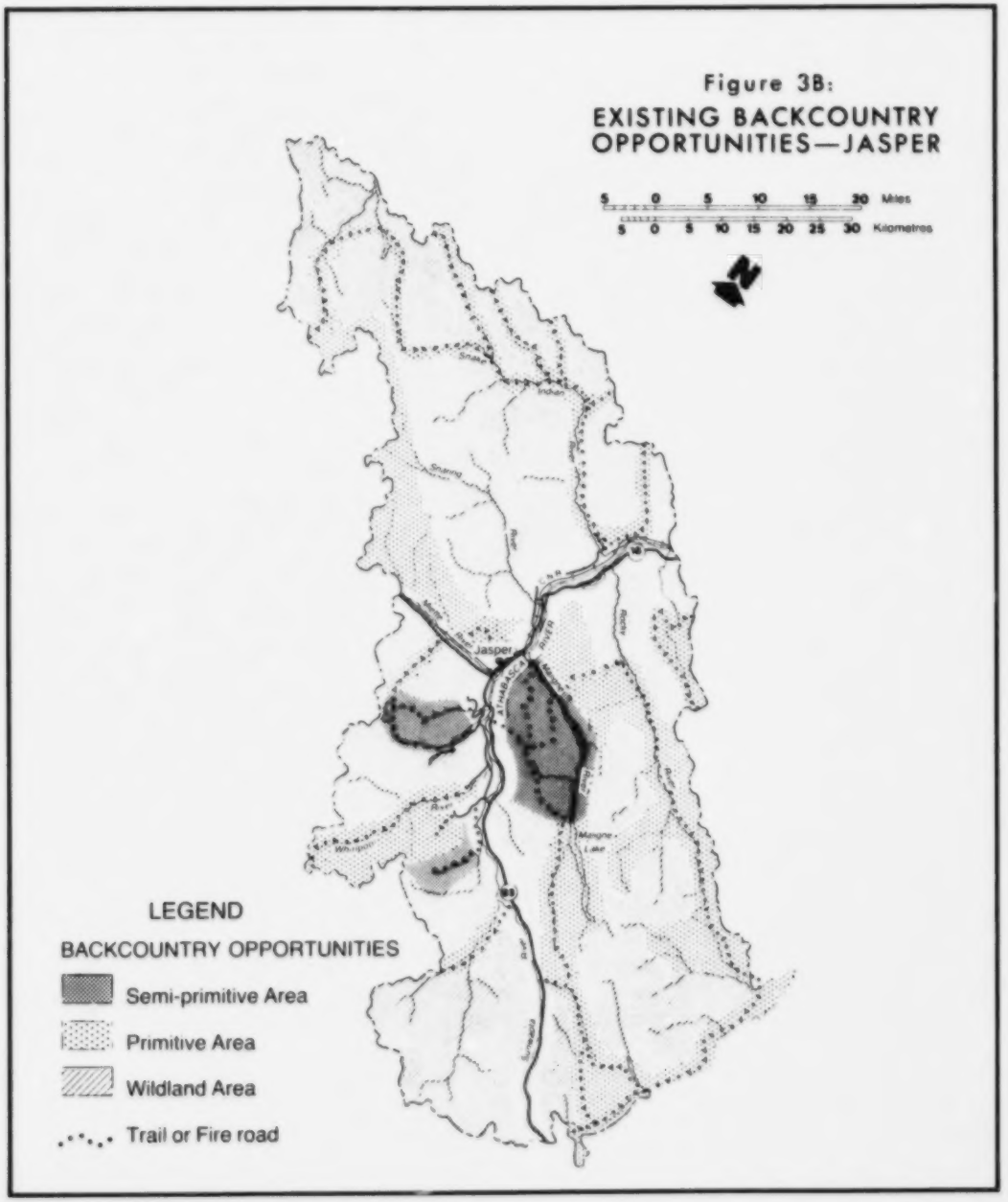
Block Direction Statements

A. *A wide range of backcountry opportunities will continue to be provided in the Four Mountain Parks; they will include semi-primitive, primitive and wildland opportunities.*

B. *Increased emphasis on semi-primitive opportunities will provide more backcountry experiences for visitors. This initiative will be achieved in an organized and environmentally sensitive manner.*

Figure 3B:

EXISTING BACKCOUNTRY OPPORTUNITIES—JASPER



4.3.2 Backcountry Facilities

Introduction

The Four Parks offer a wide range of backcountry facilities, provided in support of recreational activities that depend on the Parks' natural resources and that help visitors appreciate, understand, and enjoy the Parks.

Existing facilities include:

– more than 2,800 kilometres of designated and maintained trails;

– approximately 180 designated primitive campgrounds;

– 11 alpine huts (facilities at or above the treeline that are used for mountaineering);

– six trail shelters (facilities below the treeline that are used for a variety of backcountry activities);

– nine commercially operated lodges (e.g., Skoki Lodge) and cabins; and

– a number of permanent and rotational group camps used by commercial operators and non-profit organizations.

Existing facilities need upgrading and, possibly, expansion; in meeting those needs, priority will be given to areas that provide semi-primitive opportunities. New facilities will be provided where demonstrable demand exists in semi-primitive and, to a lesser extent, primitive areas. No new facilities will be provided in wildland areas, in order to ensure that the wilderness nature of the Parks is not compromised.

These initiatives will also mean park-experience opportunities for a greater number of visitors of varying ages, skills levels, and interests. The quality of visitors' experiences will also be controlled or managed to ensure that levels of use do not exceed desired social and environmental standards or the physical capacity of facilities.

The protection of heritage resources will take precedence over the expansion or development of facilities. In the semi-primitive areas, use will be concentrated at selected locations where facilities are provided, with their inevitable impact on resources. In this way, patterns of use can be managed to ensure that significant resource values are not jeopardized.

Block Direction Statements

A. *In order to enhance visitors' experiences and to offer opportunities for a broader range of visitors, existing backcountry facilities will be maintained, upgraded, or expanded where it is environmentally appropriate to do so and where there is sufficient demand.*

B. *No new backcountry facilities will be permitted in areas that provide wildland opportunities.*

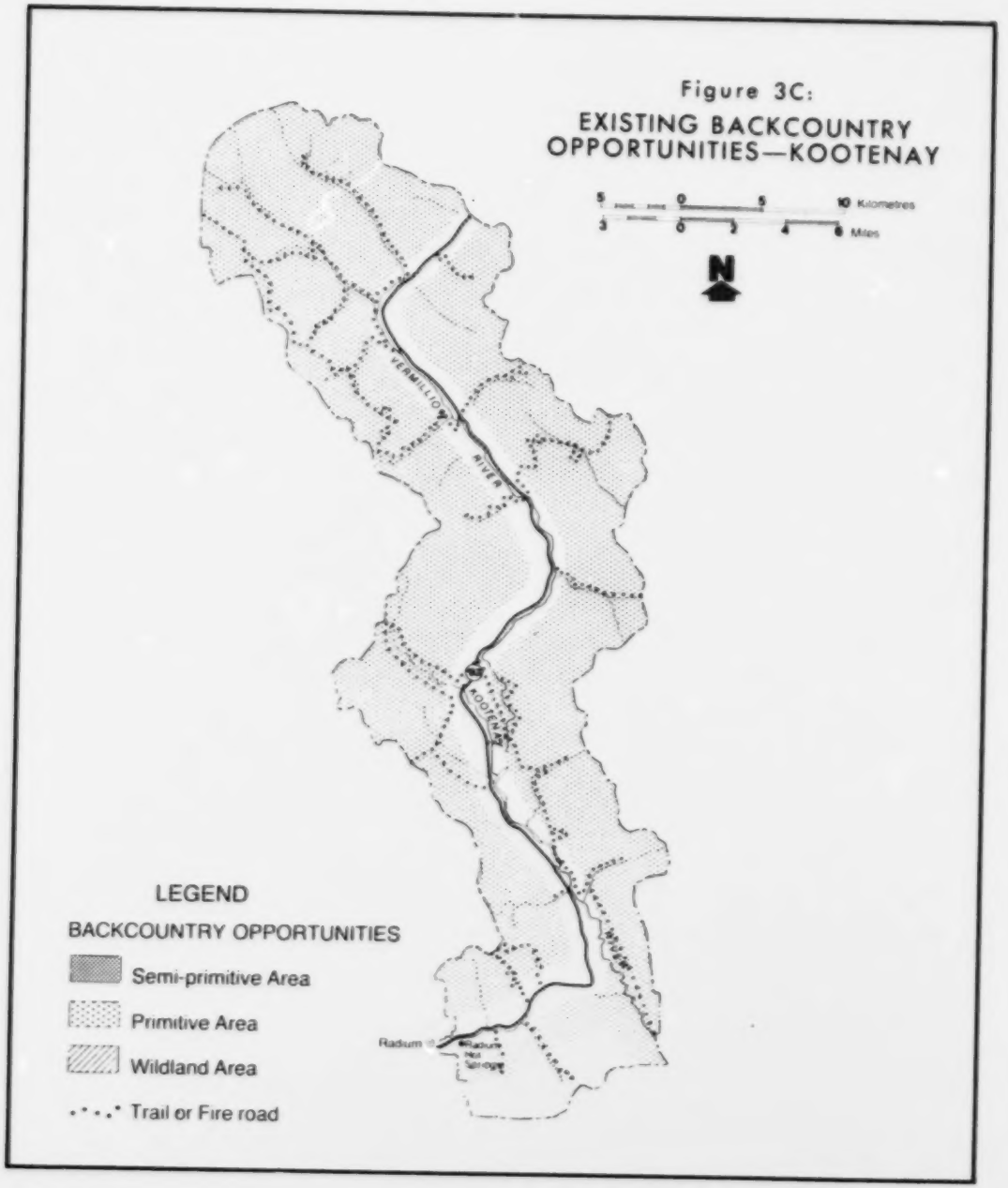
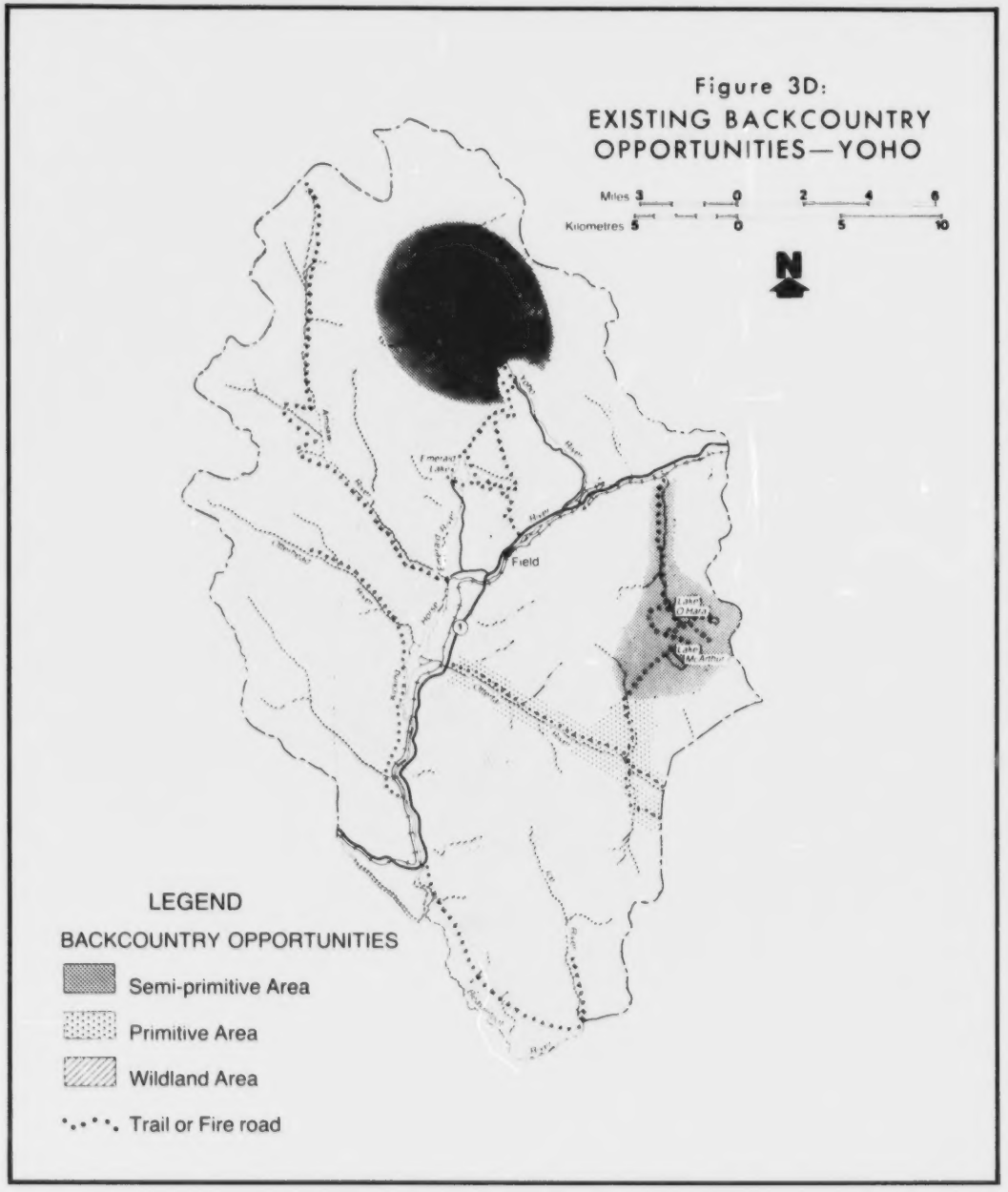


Figure 3C:
EXISTING BACKCOUNTRY OPPORTUNITIES—KOOTENAY
5 0 5 10 Kilometres
3 0 2 4 6 Miles
N
VERMILION RIVER
KOOTENAY
Radium
LEGEND
BACKCOUNTRY OPPORTUNITIES
Semi-primitive Area
Primitive Area
Wildland Area
Trail or Fire road

Figure 3D:
EXISTING BACKCOUNTRY OPPORTUNITIES—YOHO



4.3.3 Backcountry Trails

Introduction

Trails are the most important backcountry facility in the Parks: they are the means of access through heavily forested valleys and over high mountain passes. Many were neither planned nor properly developed, but evolved from wildlife and early outfitter trails. Despite such capricious origins, this 2,800 kilometre-long system of trails is remarkably complete. Extensive sections, however, are not in acceptable condition and there is strong public support for improving trail conditions.

Such a program already exists, giving priority to improving and upgrading trails in semi-primitive areas or in those areas in which horses are used a great deal. Trails will be upgraded according to standards identified in the regional trails plan. Where there are significant numbers of hikers and horses, preference will be given to multiple-purpose, rather than single-use, trails. Some improvements will be made, in conjunction with upgrading of trailhead facilities, by establishing trail links to form looped circuits of varying lengths and levels of difficulty. The demand for looped routes, which take a day or two-to-three days' travel, will receive priority. In addition, some fire roads will be closed and rehabilitated to meet an appropriate trail standard.

These initiatives will be carried out with due regard for protecting resource values and in recognition of the need to provide a range of backcountry travelling experiences. Trail standards vary with the type of backcountry opportunity being provided; they range from high-standard and multiple-purpose trails in some semi-primitive areas, to no trails in some wildland areas.

Block Direction Statements

A. *The system of backcountry trails will be upgraded, with first priority placed on those in semi-primitive areas and those affected by frequent use of horses. Where appropriate, existing trails will be connected to form looped circuits of varying lengths.*

B. *A variety of trail standards will be maintained, consistent with the backcountry opportunity being provided.*

On a backcountry trail.

4.3.4 Backcountry Camping

Introduction

During the late 1960s, designated primitive campgrounds were established at heavily used areas in order to reduce environmental damage from random camping. The level of development at the approximately 180 designated backcountry campgrounds varies considerably – from designated areas with pit privies and fire boxes to individual sites with tent pads and split-log tables. Random camping, which is allowed only in low-use and remote areas, is permitted in about half the backcountry areas in Banff and in a smaller proportion of Jasper.

A range of camping opportunities, consistent with the concept of backcountry opportunities and visitor preferences, will continue to be provided. Because some campgrounds in the Four Parks are poorly located, visitors have disappointing experiences and the environment is damaged. These effects will be mitigated and, where feasible, campgrounds will be moved to more suitable sites.

Block Direction Statements

A. *A range of backcountry camping opportunities will continue to be provided. Opportunities will range from designated sites with facilities to areas without facilities where random camping is permitted.*

B. *Improvements will be made to designated campgrounds that have had adverse effects on the environment or have given visitors unsatisfactory park experiences. Where necessary, specific campgrounds will be removed or relocated.*

4.3.5 Overnight Roofed Accommodation

Introduction

Typically, such primitive visitor accommodation facilities as huts, shelters, and lodges are associated with backcountry areas. Existing sheltered accommodation facilities are shown in Figure 4.

These overnight facilities attract a significant number of backcountry visitors and give them opportunities that are considerably different from the traditional wilderness experience. When the facility, rather than the area in which it is located, is the prime attraction, there are sometimes problems of environmental impairment, public safety, and visitor crowding.

In most cases, these backcountry facilities will remain except where they create an unacceptable impact on the environment or contribute to unsatisfactory park experiences for visitors. If possible, action will be taken to reduce specific problems; if the problem cannot be mitigated readily, the facility will be relocated or removed altogether.

The physical condition of many existing facilities requires improvement in order to provide suitable opportunities for visitors. Where required, therefore, facilities operated by Parks Canada will be upgraded and commercial lodge operators will be encouraged to make necessary improvements to their facilities.

Subject to environmental, social, and economic considerations, the capacity of existing facilities will be increased if demand warrants.

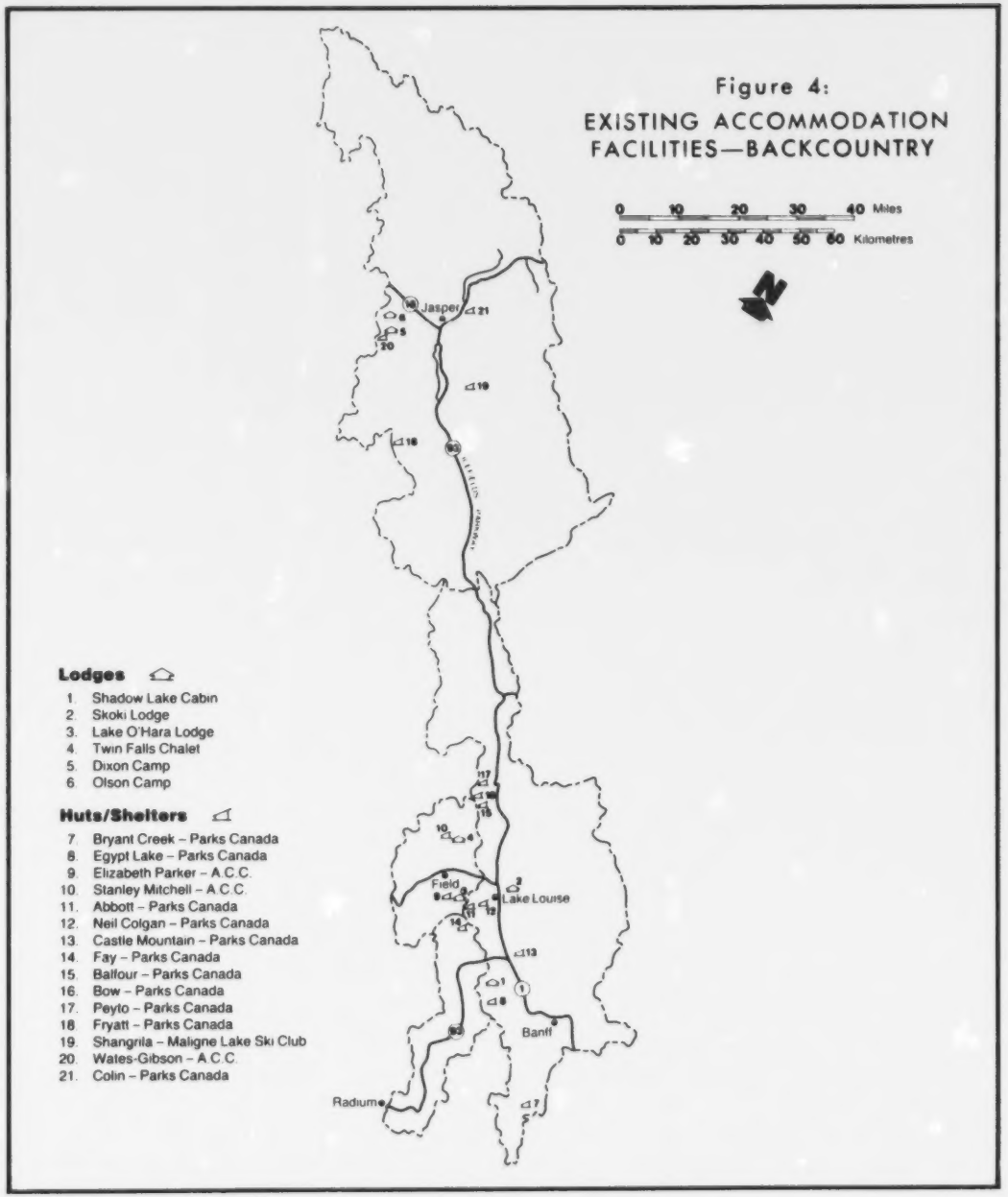


Figure 4:
EXISTING ACCOMMODATION FACILITIES—BACKCOUNTRY
0 10 20 30 40 Miles
0 10 20 30 40 50 60 Kilometres
N
Jasper
Field
Lake Louise
Banff
Radium
Lodges
1. Shadow Lake Cabin
2. Skoki Lodge
3. Lake O'Hara Lodge
4. Twin Falls Chalet
5. Dixon Camp
6. Olson Camp
Huts/Shelters
7. Bryant Creek – Parks Canada
8. Egypt Lake – Parks Canada
9. Elizabeth Parker – A.C.C.
10. Stanley Mitchell – A.C.C.
11. Abbott – Parks Canada
12. Neil Colgan – Parks Canada
13. Castle Mountain – Parks Canada
14. Fay – Parks Canada
15. Balfour – Parks Canada
16. Bow – Parks Canada
17. Peyto – Parks Canada
18. Fryatt – Parks Canada
19. Shangrila – Maligne Lake Ski Club
20. Wates-Gibson – A.C.C.
21. Colin – Parks Canada

Although a limited number of new trail shelters and alpine huts will be permitted, no new commercial lodges will be allowed. This decision is based on three factors: first, there is widespread support for retaining the existing lodges, but little for more lodges in the backcountry areas of these national parks. Second, opportunities are available in existing commercial lodges: if their physical condition is improved and their capacity expanded, it is expected that there will be adequate opportunities to meet the foreseeable demand. Third, the development of new lodges is not consistent with the philosophy or commitment of Environment Canada as expressed in the Parks Canada policy.

New trail shelters and alpine huts will be permitted only where they are environmentally appropriate and if demand exists; trail shelters will be located in heavily used semi-primitive areas, but alpine huts might also be provided in primitive areas. No roofed accommodation will be permitted in wildland areas.

Because the presence of responsible custodians reduces environmental, public-safety, and crowding problems, they will be provided where feasible.

Roofed accommodation, to be provided as outlined above, will give more visitors who have diverse ages, skills, and interests the chance to enjoy these Parks. Site-specific recommendations concerning roofed facilities will be contained in the management plans for the individual parks.

Block Direction Statements

A. *Except where they have unacceptable effects on the environment, existing alpine huts, trail shelters, and commercial lodges will be permitted to remain; otherwise, they will be relocated or removed entirely.*

B. *Where necessary, the physical condition of facilities operated by Parks Canada will be improved and the necessary improvement of other facilities will be encouraged.*

C. *Increases to the capacity of alpine huts, trail shelters, and commercial lodges will be considered, subject to environmental considerations.*

D. *New alpine huts and trail shelters may be added to the existing system, after each plan is assessed individually; suitability will be decided on the basis of visitor use and the potential effects on the environment.*

E. *No new commercial lodges will be permitted.*

F. *Alpine huts will not be permitted in areas designed to offer wildland opportunities. Trail shelters will be permitted only in areas providing semi-primitive opportunities.*

G. *Where necessary and feasible, improvements may be made to alpine huts and trail shelters to accommodate custodians.*

4.3.6 Group Camping

Introduction

The size of hiking parties is generally restricted in backcountry areas to a maximum of ten individuals; in addition, organized group camping is permitted on a controlled basis. Three types of group camps are present in the Four Parks:

first, such non-profit organizations as the Boy Scouts of Canada or the Alpine Club of Canada, which may request permission from Parks Canada to establish a group camp for a special occasion, such as the Alpine Club's General Mountaineering Camps; permission is granted for a location for a single summer season;

second, permanent group campgrounds operated by commercial horse outfitters; there are six such camps in Banff National Park;

third, two non-profit organizations, the Trail Riders of the Canadian Rockies and the Skyline Hikers, have traditionally been permitted to establish a series of rotational group camps; each is permitted to use a particular camp once every five years. Rotational group camps exist only in Banff National Park.

Opportunities for group camping will continue, although, in order to reduce environmental problems and conflict between visitors, some changes will occur. Desirable party sizes for rotational and group camps will be reviewed with the commercial outfitters and organizations involved. Where large party sizes cause problems, solutions mutually acceptable to Parks Canada and the camp operators will be sought. The total number of nights for both types of group camping will not be permitted to increase. Non-profit organizations seeking more rotational group camping experiences will be encouraged to look for them outside the national park at Banff.

Block Direction Statement

A. *Group camping will be permitted to continue, subject to considerations of the environment and of the enjoyment of visitors. No large group camps (those involving party sizes that exceed restrictions for other backcountry users) will be permitted in areas providing wildland opportunities.*

4.4 DAY-USE FACILITIES AND SERVICES

4.4.1 General

Introduction

Day-use facilities and services serve a dual purpose in the Parks, providing both a service and a recreational opportunity to the visitor. The day-use facilities discussed in this section are those outside the towns and visitor centres.

Parks Canada's facilities include picnic sites, viewpoints, roadside pull-offs, hot pools, and day-use trails. Golf courses, downhill ski areas, souvenir shops, and restaurant facilities are commercially operated, some in association with a commercial accommodation facility, others under separate leases or licences of occupation. The direction statements in this section refer to facilities not included in the lease agreement or licence of occupation of an outlying commercial accommodation facility (OCA). Commercial day-use facilities associated with OCAs are addressed in Section 4.6.

There are two golf courses and four downhill ski areas in the Four Mountain Parks. The preparation and evaluation of long-range development plans for the Sunshine, Lake Louise, Mount Norquay, and Marmot Basin ski areas will continue to be carried out through programs separate from this planning program. Long-range plans have been approved for the Sunshine and Lake Louise ski areas; a plan for the Marmot Basin is in the final stages of approval and the Mount Norquay plan is not yet complete. Existing ski areas will be permitted to develop to the capacity of their boundaries, as approved in the ski-area development plans, but, in keeping with Parks Canada policy, no new golf courses or downhill ski areas will be developed in the Four Parks.

There are four major problems in existing day-use facilities and services: first, the existence of several gaps and unserviced areas in Parks Canada's roadside facility system, particularly in day-use trails; second, a need for more commercial day-use facilities for bus tour travellers, in order to encourage visitors to come by public transit to enjoy the Parks; third, deterioration in the physical condition of some existing facilities to unacceptable levels; fourth, the physical inadequacy of many facilities to meet current demands, which commonly results in crowding during busy periods.

The Block Direction Statement for day-use facilities and services addresses the above-mentioned concerns, while ensuring that new development will be minimized. It gives priority to providing facilities that enhance visitors' enjoyment of the Parks' natural environment.

Attention will be given to providing opportunities for the elderly and handicapped to enjoy the Parks' environment. In assessing the need for new or expanded facilities, protection of heritage resources remains the primary concern and commitment of the Department of the Environment and its Parks Canada's branch.

Block Direction Statement

A. *If there is sufficient demand, more day-use opportunities will be provided for visitors, if such opportunities are appropriate to the environment. The quality of existing day-use facilities that have deteriorated will be improved.*

4.4.2 Providing Day-Use Opportunities

Introduction

The following Direction Statements provide guidance on most appropriately meeting the need for more and better day-use opportunities. The emphasis is on increasing opportunities for visitors to understand, enjoy, and appreciate the Parks' natural environment. Such roadside facilities as picnic sites, pull-offs, and day-use trails will be increased and existing facilities will be improved. An effort will be made to fill gaps in Parks Canada's roadside facilities, with particular emphasis on providing day-use trails near existing concentrations of facilities for visitors.

The need for more commercial facilities to meet current demand is also recognized; it can be accomplished by upgrading and expanding existing facilities. This approach will serve to centralize commercial facilities and minimize "strip" development and is in keeping with the Direction Statement for outlying commercial accommodation facilities, which specifically limits new development to expansion in existing leasehold areas.

Parks Canada's policy favours public transportation in places where motorized transportaton is required; selected existing day-use facilities will, therefore, be upgraded following further study, in order to serve bus-tour travellers better. This upgrading will lessen the need to provide new facilities solely for bus tours.

Block Direction Statements

A. *Existing commercial day-use facilities will be allowed to upgrade and expand to the capacity of the leasehold area or area under licence of occupation.*

B. *No leases or licences of occupation will be issued for new commercial day-use facilities in the frontcountry.*

C. *Where necessary to improve utility services or to resolve environmental problems, consideration will be given to expanding existing leasehold areas or areas under licence of occupation for commercial day-use facilities.*

D. *Existing day-use facilities that cause severe environmental or visual problems or that detract from the park experience of visitors will be relocated or removed.*

E. *Parks Canada will provide new roadside day-use facilities to fill service gaps in the existing system.*

F. *The system of day-use and looped trails will be expanded near concentrations of visitor facilities.*

G. *The needs of bus-tour travellers will be particularly considered when upgrading of selected non-commercial day-use areas to multiple-use areas is under examination.*

H. *Efforts to legislate boundaries for each downhill ski area will continue. Parks Canada will also continue to cooperate with ski-area and golf-course operators to ensure that natural resources are impaired as little as possible and that visitors' experiences are enhanced.*

4.5 RECREATIONAL ACTIVITIES

4.5.1 General

Introduction

Outdoor recreational activities provide the primary opportunities to appreciate, understand, and enjoy the natural environment of parks. Generally, those activities are encouraged that: 1) are consistent with the protection of park resources; 2) require a minimum of built facilities; 3) are economically within the reach of a wide range of visitors; and 4) do not restrict the use and enjoyment of other park visitors.

The Four Parks provide opportunities for a wide range of recreational activities, from wilderness ski touring to hot-pool soaking. Nonetheless, it is recognized that the Parks cannot meet all demands placed on them for outdoor recreation. There are some activities for which opportunities are better provided outside the Parks. Some other activities, traditionally permitted in the Parks, are appropriate but create unacceptable conflicts amongst visitors or affect the environment at specific locations and times. Such activities will be managed and, where necessary, controlled.

Parks Canada will continue to respond to the needs of today's visitors. The initiatives described in this Management Framework will be taken to meet the needs of a greater number of visitors – visitors of differing ages, skills, interests and physical abilities – ensuring that they do not significantly diminish the environment or the enjoyment of other users.

The Four Parks are under pressure to accommodate a number of new activities, such as wind-surfing, hang-gliding, and off-road bicycling. A procedure separate from the Four Mountain Parks Planning Program is being used

to evaluate the appropriateness of these new activities. The extent and levels to which new activities are permitted will be determined through the individual park-management plans.

Block Direction Statements

A. *Actions will be taken to reduce or eliminate conflicts between visitors and to reduce unacceptable effects on the environment caused by existing recreational activities.*

B. *More recreational opportunities will be provided, in order to permit more visitors with a broader range of skills, interests and physical abilities to use the Parks, but only to the extent that environmental standards and existing opportunities for visitors are not compromised.*

C. *A procedure separate from the Four Mountain Parks Planning Program will be used to evaluate the appropriateness of new activities. The extent to which these activities will be permitted will be described in the individual park-management plans.*

4.5.2 Driving for Pleasure

Introduction

Driving for pleasure is the most popular form of recreation in the Parks; in fact, the dominant impression of them gained by many visitors is the result of a drive along a highway or parkway. The importance of pleasure driving has been recognized in the design and construction of the Icefields and Bow Valley parkways. Careful selection of highway alignments will give visitors better opportunities to see the Parks. For example, a road can be designed so that a mountain peak is visible to people in the front seat of a car while they are driving through an area of trees that are so close to the road that it would not otherwise be seen. Other ways of improving the enjoyment of drivers include providing roadside facilities such as viewpoints and picnic sites, producing information brochures, and giving careful attention to the rehabilitation of construction scars. A high-quality experience for visitors driving in and through the Parks will continue to be provided.

Block Direction Statement

A. *Facilities, services, and information will continue to be provided and improved, where necessary, to meet the needs of the large number of sightseers driving in and through the Parks.*

4.5.3 Cross-Country Skiing

Introduction

There was a major increase in cross-country skiing in the Four Parks between 1972 and 1976. Today, the number of skiers continues to increase, but at a slower rate. Three types of cross-country skiing are recognized and take place in these Parks: nordic skiing, ski touring and ski mountaineering. Nordic skiing is usually done in relatively flat valley bottom and benchland areas on trails that are track-set or at least groomed. Ski touring usually follows backcountry routes and may involve crossing high passes, with exposure to many of the hazards of prolonged mountain travel. Ski mountaineering is carried out on high-alpine terrain and may involve glacier travel.

Brochures have been prepared that describe the skiing available in each Park; information is also provided on current snow conditions and avalanche hazards. It will continue to be provided and, where necessary, improved. Information on skiing opportunities outside the Parks will also be provided.

Interest in nordic skiing has increased amongst people with varying levels of ability. Some of the demand for nordic skiing has been met on lands outside national parks (e.g.,

Kananaskis Country); nonetheless, available opportunities do not meet the existing demand. In recent years, Parks Canada has developed a number of specially designed nordic-trail systems. Since 1978, for example, more than 160 kilometres of nordic trails have been upgraded and developed in Banff National Park. Track-setting takes place on designated trails in both Banff and Jasper. Opportunities for nordic skiing will be further expanded and improved; consideration will be given to several new nordic ski-trail systems and trail grooming will be increased in the Four Parks, subject to environmental considerations. Where possible, these systems will be linked to existing visitor facilities that are used in winter.

Because ski touring remains a popular and highly appropriate activity in the Four Parks, backcountry touring opportunities will be improved and increased. Information on available opportunities will be upgraded and trails will be improved. Although an increasing number of visitors go winter camping, the absence of a network of simple roofed facilities remains a significant deterrent to trips that last more than a day; there will be an increase in the capacity and number of trail shelters and alpine huts (see Section 4.3.5).

Ski trails in the Parks will be upgraded according to standards described in a trail plan that is being prepared for the western national parks.

Block Direction Statements

A. *Parks Canada will provide up-to-date information on conditions and on opportunities for all forms of cross-country skiing (nordic, ski touring, and ski mountaineering).*

B. *In response to demand, opportunities for nordic skiing will be upgraded and expanded, within limits specified in the individual park-management plans. New facilities, such as specially designed trail systems and trailhead facilities, will be provided, subject to environmental considerations. The amount of trail grooming and track-setting will also be increased.*

C. *Because many ski-touring routes follow summer backcountry trails and are poorly suited for skiing, appropriate improvements will be made to them.*

4.5.4 Canoeing, Kayaking, and Rafting

Introduction

A number of rivers in the Parks are navigable by canoes, kayaks, and rafts. The most-used rivers are the Athabasca, Malign, and Miette in Jasper, the Bow and North Saskatchewan in Banff, the Vermilion and Kootenay in Kootenay and the Kicking Horse in Yoho. Sections of the Athabasca, North Saskatchewan, and Kicking Horse rivers flowing through the Parks are candidates for inclusion in the Canadian Heritage River System and others are being considered.

Recreational use of these rivers has increased in the last 15 years even though there are relatively few support facilities such as launching sites or portage trails for river users.

Opportunities for canoeing, kayaking, and rafting will be increased and enhanced, where demand warrants, by upgrading necessary facilities and improving information.

Block Direction Statement

A. *Opportunities for canoeing, kayaking, and rafting will be improved and increased. Existing facilities, such as launching/pull-out areas and portages, and information sources, will be upgraded. New facilities and information will be provided as needed.*

4.5.5 Snowmobiling

Introduction

Since the mid-1970s, snowmobile use in the Four Mountain Parks has steadily decreased, in part because of restrictions in national parks, coupled with the availability of adjoining provincial parklands suited to the purpose, and in part because of a general decline in the popularity of this kind of activity in the region.

Snowmobiling in the parks reached a peak in the 1960s but, by the early 1970s, conflicts with other visitors and a number of environmental concerns led to attempts to control their use by separating snowmobiling from cross-country skiing. Since that time, the number of designated snowmobile trails has been gradually reduced, in keeping with Parks Canada Policy (1979), which encourages non-motorized means of access on most national park lands.

It is the commitment of the Department of the Environment and of all its branches to err, if necessary, on the side of caution when any activity that has the potential to damage the environment is being considered. In keeping with that commitment, Parks Canada will prohibit all recreational snowmobiling in the Parks. This step reflects general public opinion, the requirements of snowmobile users in the area, potential conflicts with other visitors to the Parks, policy considerations, and the fact that other opportunities for snowmobiling are available in the region.

There has been strong public support for many years to prohibit snowmobiling in the Parks. At the same time, snowmobile users in the region, according to the recreational snowmobiling organizations that speak on their behalf, want access to long-distance routes in high-alpine areas (except for a small group of Jasper residents who want to use several closed roads in the vicinity of the town.) These needs would result in conflicts with other winter backcountry users, particularly with cross-country skiers. Moreover, according to the Parks Canada Policy, recreational access by motorized vehicle is not permitted in Zone I, II, and III backcountry areas and permitting snowmobiles would mean permitting other all-terrain vehicles as well. While modern snowmobiles, driven by environmentally sensitive users, may have minimal impact on their surroundings, snowmobiles still damage resources, wildlife in particular. Furthermore, the presence of a vehicle, the noise and fumes associated with it, and the need to police users – all are antithetical to the very essence of the park experience. Fortunately for snowmobile users, they are permitted on forested lands adjacent to the Four Parks.

Block Direction Statement

A. *The use of snowmobiles for recreational purposes will be no longer be permitted in the Four Parks.*

4.5.6 Bicycling

Introduction

The number of bicyclists using the Parks is steadily increasing. Cycling in the Mountain Parks takes a variety of forms: casual, touring, and backcountry. Touring cyclists, who usually undertake tours of several days, are the most visible group; the Parks contain a number of popular long distance routes, of which the internationally known Banff-Jasper tour is the most heavily used. Fifty cyclists a day, on average, use the parkway during July and August. Approximately half of the cyclists in the Parks stay in hostels and half in campgrounds.

Cycle touring will continue to be supported in these Parks. Where necessary, the condition of existing facilities used by cyclists (e.g., hostels and walk-in campgrounds) will be upgraded and improved and information about cycling opportunities will be made available. If they are required, some new facilities and services, including locker facilities in campgrounds, grocery outlets or increased walk-in camping opportunities, will be provided along the most popular routes. The introduction of trail (off-pavement) bicycles has greatly increased the popularity of backcountry bicycling but has raised concern about its potential impact on trail surfaces, on wildlife and on other backcountry users.

The appropriateness of off-pavement bikes in national parks was assessed recently. It was decided that trail bicycling is an appropriate activity and may be carried out on a controlled basis, along designated trails and fire roads. Among the problems that will be considered when trails are being evaluated for such use are: 1) resource protection; 2) unusual danger to the safety of cyclists; 3) the potential for damage to wildlife; 4) the potential for conflict with other Park users; and 5) the ability of a trail to withstand bicycle use. The importance of these considerations cannot be over-stressed because trail bicycling will be permitted only where Parks Canada is convinced that it is not potentially damaging to the Parks' resources or to its users.

Block Direction Statements

A. *Cycle touring will be supported by upgrading the physical condition of existing facilities and by providing improved information. New facilities will be provided as required.*

B. *Trail bicycling will be permitted on designated trails to an extent and level in each Park that will be decided in the individual park-management planning process.*

4.5.7 Use of Horses

Introduction

The use of horses in what are now the Four Mountain Parks predates the Parks themselves. In the early days, horse concessions were operated in conjunction with hotels; outfitters provided visitors with horses, guides, food, and equipment. Popular interest in regular excursions resulted in the formation of such organizations as the Trail Riders of the Canadian Rockies and the Skyline Hikers. Today, they continue to hire commercial outfitters for annual backcountry trips and, in addition, livery operators conduct rides on a daily and extended-trip basis. The commercial horse operations provide visitors with a unique opportunity to explore and enjoy the Mountain Parks.

A dramatic increase in backcountry hiking in the 1970s led to greater opposition to the use of horses; as a result, it has been increasingly managed and restricted. Among the environmental concerns related to the use of horses are: trail deterioration, fouling of trails, the effect of grazing, and the environmental and sociological consequences of large group camps.

While acknowledging these problems, the use of horses is an appropriate activity and, therefore, solutions to the difficulties are being sought. Existing types of horse use will continue but certain changes in use patterns will occur in order to reduce environmental problems and the potential for conflict between visitors who use horses and those who do not. There will be no overall reduction, however, in the amount of horse use and steps will be taken to meet the requirements of private horse users. Nonetheless, the use of horses in the Parks, no matter how traditional, will not be allowed to compromise the need to protect the Parks' values, and especially the need to leave the Parks unimpaired for the

enjoyment of future generations. The size of a group of people using horses will be restricted in wildland areas.

Block Direction Statements

A. *Private and commercial horse use for recreational purposes will continue under controlled conditions.*

B. *Horse use will be permitted in those areas where the activity is environmentally acceptable; all possible steps will be taken to reduce conflict between horse users and other park visitors.*

Trail riding, Jasper.

4.5.8 Sport Fishing

Introduction

Sport fishing is an activity of long standing in national parks and continues to be recognized as acceptable; it has been, and will continue to be, controlled so that both native and exotic fish populations are managed on a sustained-yield basis.

Controls are necessary because the waters of Banff, Jasper, Kootenay, and Yoho have a low level of productivity, mainly because they are so cold. The result is a fishery that is fragile and easily over-exploited. In order to protect this fishery, serious consideration will be given to changing existing patterns of use and access.

Sport-fishing management methods could vary and might include a system of mandatory registration of anglers, of collecting comprehensive catch statistics, and of establishing a seasonal catch. Regulations on fixed or variable open seasons might be established, according to information from resource studies and creel census surveys; there might be daily catch limits according to species; fishing-gear limitations; and other regulations according to conditions (also see Section 3.1.7).

Block Direction Statement

A. *Sport fishing will be permitted, subject to the need to protect aquatic ecosystems and maintain native fish populations.*

4.5.9 Caving

Introduction

Although there has never been a comprehensive inventory, the Four Mountain Parks contain a number of cave systems, the best known at Mount Castleguard.

Recreational caving has been a popular sport for many years – in fact, the Canadian national park system began at the Hot Springs and cave on Sulphur Mountain in Banff National Park. Today, a visitor who wants to enter a cave must obtain approval from the responsible park superintendent. Members of regional spelaeogical organizations claim that authorization is not always forthcoming, and that, as a consequence, most caving in the Parks takes place without authorization. Parks Canada is committed to protecting unsurveyed but potentially significant and fragile karst and to meeting its obligations to safeguard the public, especially if a cave rescue is required.

Parks Canada continues to recognize caving as an appropriate Parks activity and will endeavour to establish cooperative and mutually acceptable arrangements with responsible speleogical organizations to resolve outstanding problems. More specific details will be given in the individual park-management plans.

Block Direction Statement

A. *Caving will continue to be recognized as an appropriate activity in the Parks. Arrangements for authorization to enter caves, protection of significant resource features, and public safety will be assured in cooperation with recognized speleogical organizations. The extent to which caving may be carried on will be spelled out in the individual park-management plans.*

4.6 FRONTCOUNTRY VISITOR ACCOMMODATION

4.6.1 General

Introduction

Visitor accommodations are provided both within and outside the Park towns and visitor centres (VCs). For this planning program, accommodation outside towns and visitor centres has been grouped into three categories: campgrounds, hostels, and outlying commercial accommodation (OCA). The existing accommodation facilities outside the towns and VCs are shown in Figure 5.

All accommodation facilities are heavily used during the peak summer season: when all facilities are operating, as many as 33,500 overnight visitors can be accommodated (average party size is assumed to be three people). An additional 4,500 people can be accommodated in overflow (peak-period) campgrounds.

Approximately 42 per cent (4,700 units) of all visitor accommodation is located in the communities and visitor centres. Plans for the town of Banff, the town of Jasper, and the Lake Louise Visitor Centre permit the development of additional accommodation, but such development must take place within the reality that they are situated in national parks which are – first and foremost – preservation areas, not urban centres.

At present, there is insufficient demand to warrant substantial expansion of existing accommodation facilities or the development of new ones. Visitors are sometimes unable to find accommodation in specific areas of the Parks but that usually occurs only on weekends during the

Figure 5:
EXISTING ACCOMMODATION FACILITIES—FRONTCOUNTRY

Campgrounds △
(not including Group Camps and Peak Period Campgrounds)

1 Two Jack Lakeside
2 Two Jack Main
3 Tunnel Mountain Village II
4 Tunnel Mountain Trailer Court
5 Tunnel Mountain Village I
6 Johnston Canyon
7 Castle Mountain
8 Protection Mountain
9 Lake Louise Tenting
10 Lake Louise Trailer
11 Mosquito Creek
12 Waterfowl Lake
13 Rampart Creek
14 Cirrus Mountain
15 Wilcox Creek
16 Columbia Icefield
17 Jonas Creek
18 Honeymoon Lake
19 Mt Kerkeslin
20 Wabasso
21 Wapiti
22 Whistlers
23 Snaring
24 Pocahontas
25 Takakkaw Falls
26 Kicking Horse
27 Hoodoo Creek
28 Chancellor Creek
29 Marble Canyon
30 McLeod Meadows
31 Redstreak

Hostels ○

32 Spray River
33 Banff
34 Castle Mountain
35 Corral Creek
36 Takakkaw Falls
37 Mosquito Creek
38 Ramparts
39 Hilda Creek
40 Beauty Creek
41 Athabasca Falls
42 Edith Cavell
43 Whistlers
44 Maligne Canyon

Outlying Commercial Accommodation □

45 Timberline Hotel
46 Johnston Canyon Bungalows
47 Castle Eisenhower Chalets
48 Storm Mountain Lodge
49 Baker Creek Bungalows
50 Moraine Lake Lodge
51 West Louise (Wapta) Lodge
52 Cathedral Mountain Chalets
53 Emerald Lake Chalets
54 Num-ti-jah Lodge
55 Parkway Lodge
56 Columbia Icefield Chalet
57 Sunwapta Falls Bungalows
58 Becker's Bungalows
59 Jasper House Bungalows
60 Alpine Village
61 Tekarra Resort
62 Pine Bungalows
63 Patricia Lake Bungalows
64 Pyramid Lake Bungalows
65 Pocahontas Bungalows
66 Miette Hot Springs Bungalows
67 Vermilion Crossing Bungalows
68 Addison's
69 Blakely's Bungalows
70 Mt Farnham Bungalows
71 Radium Hot Springs Lodge
72 Paradise Bungalows
73 Rocky Mountain Resort

eight-week peak summer season. As recently as the late 1970s, however, accommodation facilities were used at near capacity on summer weekdays and on some winter weekends.

It is not possible to forecast future changes in accommodation demand; they are dependent on many factors, including the value of the Canadian dollar, the extent to which Canada is marketed as a tourist attraction, and the amount of leisure time available to Canadians. The Block Direction Statements in this section recommend a response to increases in demand, if there are significant increases, subject to environmental limitations. Wherever feasible, new visitor accommodation will be located in communities adjacent to the Parks.

Block Direction Statements

A. *In response to demand, more overnight accommodation will be permitted in the Four Parks, subject to heritage and environmental considerations. This could be done primarily by increasing the amount of accommodation in the two towns within defined boundaries; by expanding existing campgrounds; and by controlled expansion of existing outlying commercial accommodation facilities.*

B. *The plans set out in the Block Direction Statements for Frontcountry Visitor Accommodation will be implemented in a manner consistent with the Block Direction Statements for Resource Protection and Management, and those for visitor understanding, appreciation, and enjoyment.*

4.6.2 Campgrounds

Introduction

Within the Four Parks, 32 campgrounds provide almost 5,000 campsites for summer use, mainly in July and August. On the long weekends in those months, many campgrounds, particularly those near the towns of Banff and Jasper, near Lake Louise, and the southern Icefields Parkway, are at capacity, and peak-period (overflow) camping areas must be used. Almost 1,500 camping sites, available in six campgrounds, are opened on a daily basis in response to demand.

Temporary peak-period camping areas were developed in the late 1960s in response to the large number of overnight visitors who could not be accommodated in the regular campgrounds. At that time, it was expected that new, serviced, regular campgrounds would eventually be built and that the temporary sites would be closed. Few new campsites, however, have been added to the system in the past ten years; recently, the number of visitors who want to camp has decreased and the need for new campgrounds has diminished somewhat.

Because peak-period facilities are considered temporary, little money has gone into developing them. Many are simply former gravel pits in which wells have been dug and toilets provided. It now seems apparent that, in order to cope with the many visitors who will continue to arrive on long weekends, such areas should be deemed to be permanent facilities. Instead of building costly regular campsites to handle temporary demand, peak-period areas will be improved and used for this purpose.

The use of campgrounds, which reached its highest level in the late 1970s, varies from year to year and is strongly influenced by weather and economic conditions. There are some predictions

that the demand for low-cost, no-frills, family style accommodation will increase in the future but future demand is difficult to predict. The proposals in this document outline how Parks Canada will respond if such increases do occur.

In the past ten years, the Province of Alberta has developed several new campgrounds in the Eastern Slopes area, and changes to the provincial government's management-resource policy for the area indicate that even more camping opportunities will be developed. If that is the case, demand for camping would be reduced in the region's national parks.

Within the Four Parks, large organized groups are accommodated in six group-tenting areas, capable of accommodating 800 people. The volume of use of these campgrounds varies from year to year: it declined somewhat in the early 1980s, primarily because of policy changes by local school boards with regard to town camping trips for students. As with other campgrounds, future demand is uncertain.

Block Direction Statements

A. *Campgrounds that cause serious environmental or operational problems, or that provide limited enjoyment for visitors, will be closed, relocated, or changed in order to reduce existing problems.*

B. *Attempts will be made to meet the non-peak demand for campsites. The need for additional campsites will be determined, in part, by the frequency of use of peak-period campgrounds.*

C. *Where there is an unmet demand for campsites, consideration will be given first to expanding existing campgrounds, subject to environmental concerns, operational factors, and visitor needs.*

D. *New campgrounds will be considered for areas where:*

– expansion of existing campgrounds will not provide an adequate number of sites to meet non-peak demand;

– where demand cannot be met through the development of campgrounds outside the parks;

– where overnight accommodation is not available but would be desirable.

E. *Peak-period (overflow) campgrounds will remain, but only minimal facilities will be provided; a high priority will be placed on rehabilitating the surrounding environment.*

F. *New and expanded group-tenting opportunities will be provided, subject to demand, environmental conditions, opportunities outside the Four Parks, and operational factors.*

G. *Group camping for visitors not using tents (e.g., recreational vehicle users, touring buses) will be provided in peak-period (overflow) campgrounds during non-peak periods, on a reservation basis.*

4.6.3 Hostels

Introduction

The Canadian Hostelling Association (CHA) operates 13 hostels in the Four Parks that accommodate almost 600 people. All, except a new hostel in the town of Banff which is owned by the CHA, are owned by Parks Canada; most remain open year round. A chain of hostels is operated along the Icefields Parkway and is heavily used by cyclists in summer and by cross-country skiers in winter.

Parks Canada has been involved in negotiations for two new hostels in the Parks. A site for a large, new hostel in Lake Louise has been chosen and the Alpine Club of Canada has been given permission to develop a 24-bed hostel in the Pocahontas area along the Yellowhead Highway in Jasper National Park.

Information on the use of hostels is incomplete. Use increased substantially during the late 1970s but, despite the fact that many hostels are regularly filled to capacity in the summer and in the ski season, it has declined in the past two years.

The older hostels are small, rustic facilities outside the towns. They cater to a variety of users but are best suited to those who have their own transportation, are interested in pursuing recreational opportunities in nearby areas, and prefer primitive facilities. Hostels in the towns and visitor centres, such as the one planned for the town of Banff, will generally be larger and better serviced. They will meet a different need than the older hostels, although they will also provide low-cost accommodation, and are planned for visitors who do not have their own transportation and who are less recreation oriented.

Some hostel users say they would not like to see hostels outside the towns and visitor centres expanded to accommodate more than 40 people because small hostels ensure the kind of rapport, atmosphere, and behaviour they see as important in a hostel.

Block Direction Statements

A. *Hostels will continue to serve two functions:*

– to give opportunities for enjoyment of the Parks and for outdoor recreation by providing low-cost visitor accommodation with few services outside the towns and visitor centres; and

– to provide low-cost accommodation in towns and visitor centres.

B. *The number of people accommodated in hostels will be increased through the development of larger hostels in the towns and visitor centres, the minor expansion of some existing hostels, and the possible development of new hostels.*

C. *Hostels will be relocated or removed if they provide poor experiences for visitors or if they cause severe environmental, operational, or maintenance problems that cannot be ameliorated. Respect for and protection of the environment will be the paramount criteria in evaluating hostels.*

D. *Hostels not located in the towns, in the community of Field or in the Lake Louise visitor centre, will continue to provide limited services in a rustic setting. Although some expansion of a hostel may occur during upgrading, outlying hostels will be limited in size.*

E. *As new hostels are developed in the towns and visitor centres, consideration will be given to removing older nearby hostels. The capacity of the new facilities could equal or exceed that of the hostels they replace.*

F. *A chain of hostels will continue to be provided along the Icefields Parkway; in upgrading this chain, consideration will be given to the needs of frontcountry bicyclists.*

4.6.4 Outlying Commercial Accommodation

Introduction

There are 29 outlying commercial accommodation facilities (OCAs) or bungalow camps in the Four Parks. The OCAs provide approximately 1,100 units of road-accessible commercial accommodation outside the towns and visitor centre. Although they are privately owned, they operate on land leased from Parks Canada and are an integral part of the Parks system; they must, therefore, respect all the environmental and heritage concerns that apply to the system in general.

Facilities on Tunnel Mountain and the Pinewoods Motel are considered part of the town of Banff and are therefore not OCAs; the Block Direction Statements do not apply to them. Similarly, recommendations in this section do not apply to facilities in upper and lower Lake Louise, except Paradise Bungalows, because these are dealt with in the Lake Louise Action Plan. Because of the size of the leasehold area and the variety of services offered, Jasper Park Lodge is not considered to be an OCA. Occupancy figures for commercial accommodation are not available, although some operators in Banff and Jasper say that use decreased in the past two years.

In referring to OCAs, the term "develop to the capacity of the leasehold area" is frequently used – in other words, to develop all the area held under a lease without leaving additional space for further development. To date, some 20 per cent of existing OCAs have been developed to the capacity of the leasehold area. Only 25 per cent of the leasehold area has been developed in some operations.

Because a sizeable increase in accommodation can be provided by expanding existing OCAs, new ones will not be permitted. There is an adequate number of OCAs in the Four Parks and new land outside the towns should not be disturbed for this purpose.

Throughout the planning program, operators of some OCAs expressed concern about their ability to continue long-term operations under existing conditions; they spoke of the need to expand in order to remain economically stable or to cover the expenses they would incur in upgrading facilities or in meeting improved sewage-disposal standards.

OCAs provide accommodation that is physically closer to nature than is accommodation in the towns. In the past, OCAs tended to provide fewer services at lower prices than in-town hotels; as they have been redeveloped, services have been upgraded and rental prices have risen. Parks Canada will endeavour to ensure that OCAs continue to provide more rustic accommodation than is available in the towns and the visitor centre.

Block Direction Statements

A. *Outlying commercial accommodation will continue to serve two functions:*

– to provide visitors with overnight accommodation in a low-density development in a natural setting outside a town or visitor centre; and

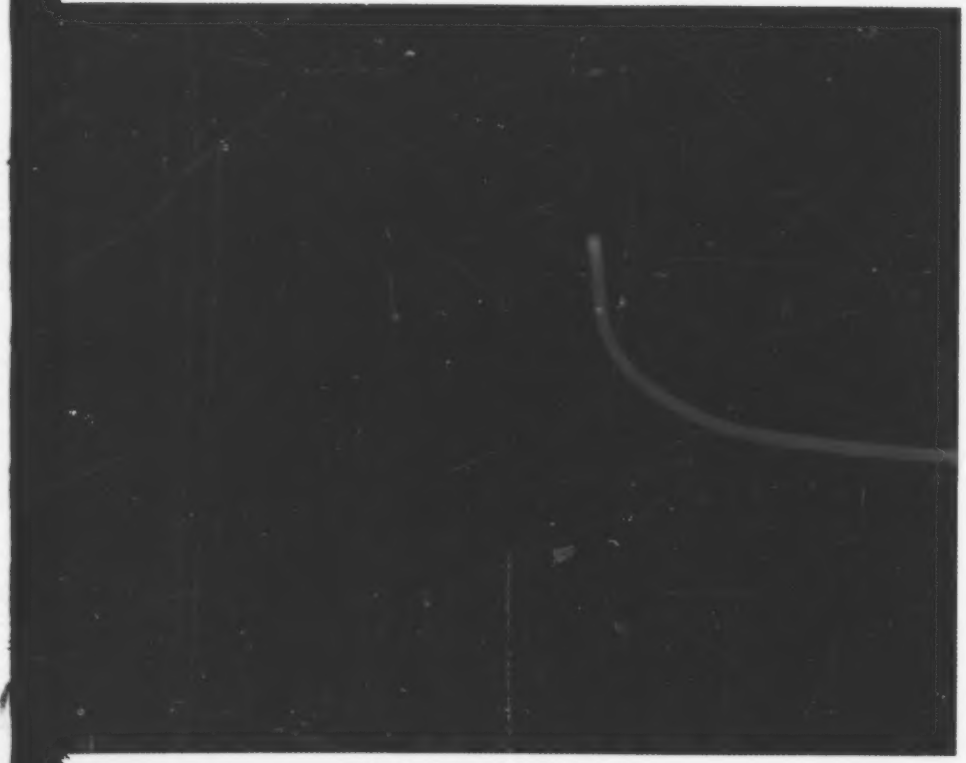
– to provide day-use services to meet the needs of travellers, outside of communities.

B. *No additional OCAs will be permitted.*

C. *Year-round operation of an existing OCA will be supported when it does not create unacceptable operational problems and costs to the Park and does not damage the environment.*

D. *Guidelines will be prepared to direct redevelopment plans for OCAs. The following criteria will be used as a basis for preparation of the guidelines:*

i) *Redevelopment will be limited to the land currently held under lease or licence, except in specific circumstances as outlined in sections vi and vii.*



Baker Creek Bungalows, Banff.

ii) *OCAs will be classified into groups on the basis of such factors as function or location. Redevelopment guidelines will be prepared for each group and will differ from one group to another.*

iii) *Consideration will be given to the historical and architectural significance of the structures contained in OCAs, in keeping with the Department of the Environment's program for protecting heritage properties under federal jurisdiction.*

iv) *The guidelines will outline the acceptable type of services and level of development (e.g., density, floor space ratio). The operator will suggest specific services for an OCA as part of the development approval process.*

v) *Consideration will be given to permitting some OCAs to develop, within the leasehold area, to such higher densities as lodges, – particularly those OCAs near towns or visitor centres or those at destination areas.*

vi) *In order to improve services and to reduce damage to the environment, consideration will be given to adjusting leasehold area boundaries for existing OCAs, as long as the total area of the leasehold does not increase. Land exchanges for relocating existing OCAs will be considered, if they are needed to reduce damage to the environment or to improve visitors' experiences.*

vii) *Expansion of a leasehold area for an existing OCA will be considered if it is needed to improve utility services (i.e., water and/or sewer) to support facilities in the leasehold area. An exception will be considered for Parkway Lodge (Saskatchewan River Crossing Bungalows) where land may be required for parking related to tour-bus traffic.*

4.7 TOWNS AND VISITOR CENTRES

4.7.1 General

Introduction

The towns of Banff and Jasper, the community of Field, and the Lake Louise Visitor Centre are important components of the Four Parks. Initially, they served as railway construction camps and, soon thereafter, they were developed as tourist facilities.

A role statement was prepared for the towns of Banff and Jasper as part of the planning process. It describes the towns as "communities providing services for national park visitors, housing, administration and service headquarters of the national parks and presenting opportunities to orient concentrations of national park visitors to the activities and interpretive programs of the national parks". Further direction is provided in Parks Canada Policy and in the community plans.

There are community plans for each of the communities and for Lake Louise. The Field Community Plan, approved in 1980, is still valid; the Lake Louise Action Plan, the Banff Urban (*sic.*) Concept Plan, and the draft Jasper Community Plan were prepared following extensive studies and public consultation. These will have to be reviewed for conformity with evolving park-management plans.

The individual park-management plans will define the size, form, purpose, and the character of the communities and the visitor centres and will provide a basis for future reviews of existing community plans.

The role of the towns and visitor centres in providing tourist facilities and services will be enhanced, with particular attention to the towns as an introduction to the rest of the Parks. Under the three community plans, new commercial and residential accommodation, retail, and recreational facilities will be permitted, subject to strict adherence to the environmental and heritage regulations and policies of all branches of the Department of the Environment. New towns and visitor centres will not be permitted in the Four Mountain Parks.

It makes little sense for the federal government in Ottawa to be laying down the law to local residents about such local matters as street lights and garbage disposal when they could be dealt with more effectively by the people directly affected – the townspeople themselves. Within an overall plan that is sensitive to environmental concerns, therefore, local government in the towns of Banff and Jasper will be favoured. Parks Canada has encouraged the towns to adopt such a system of local government as municipalities under Alberta law.

It will be necessary to amend the National Parks Act, (NPA), as well as to gain approval from the Province of Alberta, to implement local-government plans; the first NPA amendments have already been proposed. Local government would involve new planning and development agencies for the two towns and would require careful coordination with overall park planning in order to protect the Parks' heritage resources.

Block Direction Statement

A. *Detailed plans for the towns of Banff and Jasper, the community of Field, and the Lake Louise Visitor Centre will conform to the general guidelines contained in this document and park-management plans and to the overall commitment within the Department of the Environment to safeguarding the environment and heritage resources*

4.7.2 The Town of Banff

Introduction

The town of Banff, established in 1886, experienced a tremendous increase in visitors in the 1970s and early 1980s – much of it in the winter and the early spring months because of downhill skiing opportunities in Banff National Park.

The town of Banff provides goods and services to visitors, introduces them to the Park, and is the administrative centre for the Park's operations. There are about 1,700 residential dwelling units for the 6,500 or more residents, of whom 4,627 (according to the 1981 census) live there permanently. Approximately 2,700 hotel/motel units, with a capacity of 9,100 visitors, are available.

The town of Banff will remain an important tourist destination. Initiatives will be taken to expand the services and to make the town a major centre for interpreting the entire national park system to visitors.

Environmental concerns, as expressed in a 1984 departmental study, dictate that, in general, future growth in the town will take the form of expanding facilities and services within the existing built-up area. In order to preserve a scale and character appropriate to its site in a national park, the town of Banff's development standards will be maintained. In general, development will occur through in-filling that meets carefully designed strictures; some 1,200 accommodation units could be added, the actual number depending on the overall ability of the town to provide housing and other services that would be needed.

Concern has been expressed by the public and by special interest groups about social problems in the town of Banff. Owing to the importance of tourism and to the number of temporary residents, some social problems exist in Banff that are not prevalent in other communities of the same size. The social structure and health of the community and the social impact of further development will be important considerations in future planning for the town. A program will be initiated, therefore, to improve the town's environment in ways that are consistent with the fact that it is located in a national park.

The goal of such a program will be to enhance Banff's existence as a small, intimate community that meshes seamlessly with its environment. Planning will stress environmental control and sensitivity to the rich heritage of Banff. Banff's appeal to tourists and the services the town provides for them will be stressed, but not at the expense of environmental objectives, which must remain paramount. Common sense and good taste will be the guiding standards in applying those objectives.

Block Direction Statements

A. *The town of Banff will have three main functions: 1) to provide more service to visitors; 2) to act as a major interpretive centre for the Park and for the entire national parks system; and 3) to be the administrative centre for the operation of the Park. As a consequence, the town will continue to serve in the future as it has in the past as a tourist destination.*

B. *In general, the boundaries of the town of Banff will be defined to include existing adjacent built-up and subdivided areas, including facilities on Tunnel Mountain and at the Pinewoods Motel. The boundaries, which will be set out in the park-management plan, will follow the principle that growth will be permitted only through environmentally and heritage-sensitive redevelopment and infilling. An assessment of the social, economic, and physical consequences of growth will guide the level and intensity of future development.*

C. *Parks Canada will assist in improving the town of Banff's environment; the town will continue to be a nucleus from which national park activities originate. The purpose is to ensure that Banff is enhanced as a fine small town set in a national park.*

4.7.3 The Town of Jasper

Introduction

A wide variety of goods and services is available in Jasper, which is a tourist destination, a park service centre, a divisional point for the Canadian National Railway, (CNR), and a functioning community. Jasper has approximately 4,930 people, of whom 3,422 are permanent residents, according to the 1981 census. There are about 1,250 residential dwelling units and 1,200 hotel/motel units in the town plus a number of nearby OCAs. The draft community plan will allow an increase of some 500 hotel/motel units in order to accommodate an additional 1,500 visitors. Retail space will also be permitted to expand according to demand.

While the town of Jasper is managed under the same Parks Canada policies as Banff, it developed less rapidly and it has a more stable character, perhaps because one large company, the CNR, employs at least a third of all local workers.

The town of Jasper will continue to perform visitor-service, interpretive, and administrative functions which, according to the community plan, can be expanded. As a result of its various roles, and its location in a magnificent park setting, the town will remain an important tourist destination. The environment and heritage-sensitive criteria applied to plans for the town of Banff will be applied with equal vigour to plans for the town of Jasper.

Block Direction Statements

A. *The town of Jasper will serve four main functions: 1) as a provider of service to visitors; 2) as a major interpretive centre; 3) as an administrative centre for the operation of the Park; and 4) as a divisional point for the Canadian National Railway. In carrying out the first three functions, the town of Jasper also serves as a tourist destination in a national park.*

B. *The boundaries for the town of Jasper will be set out in the park-management plan, which is based on the draft community plan that has been completed for the town. The guiding principle will be to allow controlled growth through redevelopment, infilling and new development within the town boundaries. An assessment of the social, economic, and physical consequences of growth will determine the level and intensity of future development.*

C. *Parks Canada will assist in improving the town's environment because the town of Jasper will continue to be a nucleus from which national-park activities originate. The goal is to make Jasper a first-rate small town in a national park setting.*

4.7.4 The Community of Field

Introduction

Field began as a railway construction camp in 1884; with the creation of the Yoho Park Reserve in 1901, it also became the Park's administrative centre. Today, it is still a Parks Canada administrative centre and an operational centre for the CPR, but it has not developed into a major accommodation or visitor-service centre. It is expected that, with major development and redevelopment of visitor facilities at Lake Louise, 28 kilometres to the east, Field will continue to play a relatively minor role in serving Park visitors.

There is space within the community of Field, however, to provide such visitor amenities as a hotel, hostel, restaurant and store. They would serve visitors staying in Yoho, as well as residents of Field, who now have very few services normally found in a community the size of Field.

Block Direction Statement

A. *Field will continue to be an administrative centre for Parks Canada and an operational centre for the Canadian Pacific Railway; it may have an increased visitor-services role. Information services in Field will be improved.*

4.7.5 The Lake Louise Visitor Centre

Introduction

The Lake Louise Visitor Centre consists of three distinct areas: the area surrounding the Lake, the valley floor, and the ski hill. Although the Lake and ski-hill areas are major attractions, most visitors stay only for the day and, as a result, the visitor centre has not grown into a cohesive community. It provides a smaller range of facilities and services than the town of Banff.

The Lake Louise Action Plan guides any development on the valley floor and in the Lake area; it states that: "Development must occur so as to control and limit growth at Lake Louise in the long term". It also says that development is meant only to provide essential services to those who would visit the area in any event and not to generate more services that would attract more visitors.

It is intended that, once major new facilities – staff housing, a new visitor reception centre, a hostel and retail complex – have been completed, the results will be assessed and any further plans for development will be subject to public review as part of the Lake Louise Action Plan. (Planning for the Lake Louise Visitor Centre and for the ski area is a separate process.)

Block Direction Statement

A. *Development will proceed according to the 1982 Lake Louise Action Plan. Consideration of any further development will require a formal revision to that plan.*

4.8 ACCESS

4.8.1 General

Introduction

Over the years, attempts to gain access to the Four Mountain Parks have left a network of roads, railway lines and airfields. The roads not only bring visitors to the Parks, they also carry considerable through traffic. The airfields serve relatively small numbers of non-commercial flights.

Because the railway lines and major highways are nationally significant transportation corridors, decisions about upgrading them must be based on national priorities. It is Parks Canada's responsibility to ensure that existing access routes have as little impact as possible on Park resources and on the quality of visitors' experiences, a mandate to which the Department of the Environment is irrevocably committed.

Most of the following Direction Statements reflect Parks Canada Policy regarding park access and circulation; they include statements on new communication, transportation, and utility corridors; public transportation; and the Banff and Jasper airfields.

4.8.2 National Transportation and Utility Corridors

Introduction

Within the Parks, there are such nationally significant transportation and utility corridors as the Trans-Canada and Yellowhead highways, and the main lines of the Canadian Pacific and Canadian National railways. There is a need, within strict environmental limits, to improve and upgrade these routes (e.g., to twin the Trans-Canada Highway). New communication, transportation, and utility corridors will not be routed through the Four Mountain Parks.

Block Direction Statement

A. *Existing national transportation and utility corridors will be managed in a manner that minimizes their impact on the Parks' heritage resources and on visitors' experiences.*

Sinclair Canyon, Kootenay.

4.8.3 Park Roads

Introduction

The Four Mountain Parks contain an extensive system of local, collector, and arterial roads that are a key to visitors' enjoyment of the Parks. The major roads are the Icefields Parkway (241 kilometres), the Banff-Windermere Highway (108 kilometres), and the Bow Valley Parkway (50 kilometres). (The Trans-Canada and Yellowhead highways are not dealt with in this section because they are national transportation corridors.) With

improvements and minor adjustments, the system is adequate for the next 15 years. Adjustments could include extending Vermillion Lakes Drive to connect with the Bow Valley Parkway, although only after further study and public review. High-quality viewing opportunities will be provided in conjunction with road adjustments and improvements, where this can be done without damaging resources.

The Parks also contain a number of backcountry fire roads that were built between 1930 and 1960. They are not required for fire-suppression purposes now, but are used by hikers, horseback riders, bicyclists, researchers, and Park staff. Private and Park vehicles are permitted on some fire roads and public vehicles are permitted on sections of the Celestine, Geraldine, and Moab lakes roads.

Rehabilitating roads that are no longer being used is discussed in Block Direction Statement 3.1.2.B.

Block Direction Statements

A. *No new roads will be built in the Four Mountain Parks, but there may be improvements and adjustments to existing roads.*

B. *Fire roads that are no longer required for management of the Parks will be reviewed for closure. Decisions will be reflected in individual park-management plans.*

4.8.4 Airfields

Introduction

There are unlicensed turf airfields – without lights, hangars, or significant buildings – at both Banff and Jasper. Use is controlled by Parks Canada under its Policy and Regulations (Section 15), which prohibit air access to the Parks, except under strictly controlled conditions.

There has been considerable controversy about the future of these fields: the one at Banff is considered dangerous because of air turbulence caused by nearby mountains. As a result, there have been few requests for upgrading, although local flying clubs have lobbied for it to be retained as an emergency landing strip. A proposal to construct a new airfield in the Bow Corridor outside the Park would make this unnecessary.

The safer Jasper airfield receives more use but is situated in an important elk habitat. Parks Canada has received numerous requests to upgrade Jasper's facilities for private and, in some cases, commercial use. The nearby Jasper-Hinton airfield offers commercial and recreational air traffic more sophisticated facilities.

Ideally, the Banff and Jasper airfields would be removed, but more study is needed to determine whether they are required for emergencies. Therefore, a study will be undertaken in cooperation with the Ministry of Transport to assess the need for emergency landing strips in Banff and Jasper. The results of this study will be reflected in the individual park-management plans.

The control of airspace over the Parks is also contentious: low-level flights by private pilots and by some commercial operators have the potential to harass wildlife and they are an irritating intrusion in wildland settings. At present, there are altitude restrictions only over built-up and populated areas. Parks Canada will continue to work toward resolution of the problem, which is a policy matter beyond the scope of this planning program.

Block Direction Statement

A. *The Banff and Jasper airfields are anomalous facilities, and it is not appropriate to retain them. They will be removed or, if there is a demonstrable need for emergency use, retained for that purpose only.*

4.8.5 Public Transportation

Introduction

Such public forms of transportation as buses and trains are encouraged in national parks. Bus tours are becoming increasingly popular in the Four Parks and Parks Canada has cooperated with tour-bus operators in developing facilities and services to support their operations. Past explorations into using public transit to reduce congestion at popular destination areas (such as Lake Louise) have indicated that the concept is not economically possible without substantial subsidies by Parks Canada.

Access to and through the Parks by existing rail lines will be encouraged and efforts will be made to improve the railway travellers' park experiences.

Block Direction Statement

A. *Facilities and services will be modified, where appropriate, to encourage use of public transportation within the Four Mountain Parks.*

5. Completing the Park-Management Plans

5. Completing the Park Management Plans

The Management Framework for the Four Mountain Parks provides the context for further planning; the next stage is the preparation of individual park-management plans for Banff, Jasper, Kootenay, and Yoho national parks. According to Parks Canada Policy, 1979:

> *The park management plan contains a statement of management objectives and the means and strategies for achieving them, stated in a broad but comprehensive manner. The level of detail is confined to the definition of the type, character, locale of developments and the provision of guidelines for resource management, interpretation and visitor use. The management plan is not an end in itself; rather it constitutes a framework within which subsequent management, implementation and detailed planning will take place.*

Completion of the Four Park management plans in 1987 will provide specific management objectives and strategies for the management of the resources within the Parks. The highest degree of protection will be afforded to resources while opportunities to enjoy, learn about, and appreciate the Parks will be given to visitors. Plans for the Four Parks will be developed concurrently and will take approximately two years to complete. Members of the public will have opportunities to review and comment on draft plans before those plans are given final consideration by the Minister of the Environment.

The process used to develop the park-management plans will follow the same general stages as the Management Framework, although some modification will be possible because much of the research and documentation prepared for the Management Framework is also applicable to the park-management plans. These modifications and related considerations are outlined below. The Terms of Reference, to be developed before the park-management plans are put into effect, will further define the purpose, process, and products of the park-management planning process.

One important consideration in developing the park plans is the assimilation of new information on resources, regional development, visitor trends, visitor expectations, etc. This information will be incorporated into proposals as it becomes available, although it must be understood that, in making decisions, information is always incomplete and that society's values change. Planning must, therefore, be a dynamic process.

Future alterations to values, travel patterns, and environmental considerations will be incorporated into the plans through informal annual reviews and through the more formal reviews normally held every five years. No changes will be made to the overall intent of the long-range plans or to the significant proposals they contain without comprehensive study and public consultation.

Some steps in the park-management planning process have already been completed: a Purpose and Objectives Statement for the Four Parks has been prepared and approved as part of the development of the Management Framework; a considerable amount of work has been undertaken to develop detailed planning options. These options, along with other means of achieving the goals set out in the Block Direction Statements, will be re-examined and evaluated. From the process will come the specific proposals that will form the individual park-management plans.

The Direction Statements provided in the Management Framework will set the general context for relevant sections of the park plans. It should be understood that the Block Direction Statements will not necessarily be applied equally in all Four Parks. For example, provision of additional visitor opportunities may be appropriate in three of them, but not in the fourth, because of environmental, use, or operational considerations. The general principle of increasing opportunities would still apply to the block as a whole.

All proposals will be subject to review under the Federal Environmental Assessment and Review Process (EARP). The process will ensure that all environmental, social, and cultural implications of the plans are considered before any decision is made to proceed with, reject, or modify proposed actions.

Environmental-impact assessment in park-management planning is a multi-level process. The planning options, which were presented to the public in June, 1984, included an impact assessment of each proposal at the conceptual level. The Management Framework – Four Mountain Parks does not contain site-specific proposals. It was, therefore, not subject to an individual environmental-impact assessment. Further comprehensive environmental screening will be conducted during the preparation of the individual park-management plans. Mitigating measures will be identified and incorporated into the plan proposals. Where required, the need for monitoring will be established and any lack of information will be noted for future action. Further application of EARP will occur after the park-management plans are approved and specific proposals are implemented. Each proposal will be screened again during the implementation phase before any site work or activity.

The direction provided in this Management Framework establishes the optimum for preservation and use that is appropriate to the Four Mountain Parks for the next 15 years. The more detailed park-management plans that will be developed over the next two years will carry out the direction through specific proposals that provide a high degree of resource protection while increasing opportunities for the use and enjoyment of the Four Parks.

Snowshoeing in Kootenay.

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Wildlife Protection and Management
Gravel Extraction Activities
The Distribution and Status of Wolves
The Distribution and Status of Caribou
Vegetation Management and Protection
Angling and Stocking
Boundary Area Wildlife; Status and Concerns
Banff National Park – Resource Management and Public Safety

Backcountry Activities and Facilities

An Overview of Backcountry Management
Backcountry Hiking: Use and Management
Backcountry Roads (Fireroads)
Horse Use
Backcountry Lodges
Backcountry Shelters and Alpine Huts

Recreational Activities

An Overview of Some Considerations Related to Recreational Activities
Caving
Roadside Facilities and Use
Cross-country Skiing
Bicycle Use
Snowmobile Use

Frontcountry Accommodation

Frontcountry Accommodation: An Overview
Hostels
Frontcountry Campgrounds
Outlying Commercial Accommodations (Bungalow Camps)

Access

Aspects of Transportation
Aircraft Use and Airstrips
The Arterial Highway System

Communications

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Towns and Visitor Centres

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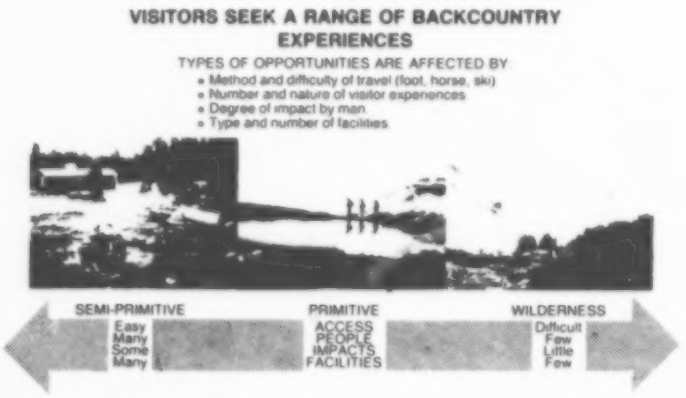
Appendices

Appendix A: An Explanation of the Backcountry Opportunity Concept

Visitors to backcountry areas seek a range of recreational opportunities: some want solitude, while others enjoy meeting people. Some want the comfort of staying in roofed overnight accommodations while others avoid such amenities.

Management of more than 95 per cent of the lands in the Four Mountain Parks is designed to provide backcountry opportunities for visitors in a massive area covering more than 19,000 square kilometres, ranging from heavily used Egypt Lake in Banff National Park to the less used Snaring River Valley in Jasper.

Backcountry Opportunities Spectrum



The concept of recreational opportunity is based on a recognition that the value an area holds for visitors is based on a combination of physical, biological, sociological and administrative conditions (Clark and Stankey, 1979.) Four factors are important in determining the suitability of an area for backcountry recreation: access, visitor contact, site management, and resource impairment. The following is a brief description of each:

A) Access

In the Four Mountain Parks, most backcountry visitors are restricted by topography and the presence of dense forests to using trails. Consequently, these are an important tool in determining use patterns and they influence the way visitors experience the backcountry (Hendee, et al., 1978.)

Ease and type of access are particularly important variables; ease is related to the degree of difficulty of the trail and to the standard used in its design. Type is related to the mode of travel: foot, horse, or ski. In the Mountain Parks, there is a variety of ease and type of access.

B) Visitor Contact:

Backcountry experiences are affected by the amount and the nature of contact with others. Numerous visitor-use surveys indicate that there is a strong preference for solitude in backcountry settings, generally reported to be most marked at campsites. Observation of actual behaviour shows that: 1) many visitors seek varying degrees of contact with other users; 2) encounters with people who have very different backcountry expectations and values may be undesirable. The level of contact beyond which crowding occurs (or in which social carrying capacity is exceeded)

varies according to the expectations and perceptions of individual visitors. At present, backcountry areas in the Four Parks offer a range of opportunities for both contact and solitude.

C) Site Management

In backcountry settings, site management usually consists of developing a facility and of site hardening, although some revegetation may be required in special cases. Such facilities as alpine huts, trail shelters and designated primitive campsites have been used to concentrate and channel the use of backcountry areas. Their effectiveness as techniques for protecting resources depends, however, on site-specific conditions. Facilities can also be provided for the convenience, enjoyment, and safety of visitors. Areas that attract large numbers of relatively inexperienced users may require higher levels of site management than those used by experienced backcountry visitors. The level and type of site management should be consistent with the opportunity to be provided.

D) Resource Impairment:

Determining acceptable levels of impact on the environment is difficult; it is based on objective assessments of how much users affect a site and subjective evaluations of the significance of their impact on it. Moreover, information about ways to reduce the impact of visitors on the environment is needed. While the degradation of heavily used backcountry areas is not acceptable, a narrow range of allowable consequences and appropriate measures to limit those consequences must be accepted if the backcountry is to be used at all.

Collectively, visitor contact, site management, and resource impairment affect the opportunities available to backcountry users. Each of the three is acceptable under certain conditions; based on those conditions, it is possible to identify areas that are suitable for backcountry use. Three types of recreational areas – semi-primitive, primitive, and wildland – and the factors in managing each are shown in Table 1.

Semi-primitive sites are those with easy access, high levels of visitor contact and such facilities as campsites, shelters, and commercial lodges. They are, typically, such popular destinations as the Tonquin Valley in Jasper National Park and Egypt Lake in Banff National Park.

Primitive sites are provided in areas where there is less evidence of people than in semi-primitive areas. At present, these are the most commonly available sites in the Four Mountain Parks. The Helmet Creek-Floe Lake area of Kootenay National Park and the Ottertail-Goodsir area in Yoho National Park have such primitive sites.

Wildland sites are those with low levels of use and they are essentially free of human intrusion – for example, in the Snake, Indian, and Snaring valleys in Jasper and in the northwest portion of Banff.

Table 1: BACKCOUNTRY OPPORTUNITY AREAS

MANAGEMENT FACTORS	OPPORTUNITY AREAS		
	SEMI-PRIMITIVE	PRIMITIVE	WILDLAND
ACCESS			
1. Trail Standard	(high)	(medium)	(low)
2. Difficulty	(easy)	(moderately)	(very)
			(no trails)
CONTACT			
1. Level	(high)	(moderate)	(low)
SITE MANAGEMENT			
1. Facility Conveniences	(many)	(some)	(few-none)
2. Site-hardening Requirements	(required)	(some required)	(not required)
RESOURCE IMPAIRMENT			
1. Acceptable Impacts	(some)	(few)	(very few)
2. Acceptable Mitigation	(site management)	(some site management)	(visitor management)

The concept of backcountry opportunity areas is not intended to replace or refine Parks Canada's five part land-use zoning system; rather, it can be applied in the following specific ways:

1. to inventory backcountry opportunities currently available;

2. to plan for providing and allocating a range of backcountry opportunities;

3. to identify the consequences of management styles and decisions on those opportunities;

4. to match what backcountry users want with what is available; and

5. to monitor any impairment to resources that results from use and to ensure that objectives for resource protection and visitor satisfaction in an area are being met.

Appendix B: National Park Zoning System

Zoning is employed in park management to define the extent of use and preservation of parklands. Its application is in keeping with established goals, objectives, resource analyses, and potential uses of a park. A variety of resource-management techniques and policies may be needed in order to achieve zoning objectives.

According to the National Parks Policy, Section 2.0, Parks Canada has five types of zones:

Zone I – Special Preservation

Zone I includes specific areas or features that merit special preservation because they contain or support unique, rare, or endangered features or the best examples of natural features. Access and use is strictly controlled and may be prohibited entirely. No motorized access or built facilities are permitted in Zone I areas.

Zone II – Wilderness

Extensive areas that contain examples of each of the natural history themes of the parks and that are to be maintained as wilderness are designated Zone II. Activities requiring nothing more than primitive facilities for visitors, appropriate to a wilderness experience, are permitted. Limits are placed on the number of users allowed and no motorized access is permitted. Zone II areas are managed in a way that disperses visitors, rather than concentrating them.

Zone III – Natural Environment

Zone III areas are natural environments that can, with a minimum of harm, sustain some low-density outdoor activities that need few related facilities. Non-motorized access is given preference and public transit is permitted. Controlled access by private vehicles is permitted only where traditionally it has been allowed.

Zone IV – Outdoor Recreation

Limited areas that can accommodate a broad range of educational outdoor activities and related facilities that do not harm the natural landscape, and that are safe and convenient, are designated Zone IV areas. Motorized access is permitted, but may be separated from non-motorized access.

Zone V – Park Services

Zone V includes existing towns and visitor centres in certain national parks; they contain a concentration of visitor amenities and support services, as well as administrative facilities. Motorized access is permitted.